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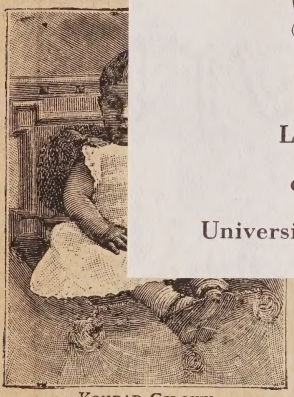

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A DETECTIVE'S STRANGE ADVENTURES

BY

DICK DONOVAN

AUTHOR OF "IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW," "TRACKED TO DOOM," ETC.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1892

Dick Donovan is equivalent to J. E. Muddock. He was born at Southampton in 1843.

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THE STORY OF SOME REMARKABLE FRAUDS.

One of the most conspicuous men in Edinburgh about a quarter of century ago was Mr. Christopher Gourlay, and there was no man whose society was more courted. He was conspicuous for many things, amongst them being good looks—indeed, he was often referred to as the handsomest man in Edinburgh; he also had a ready though somewhat rough wit; he could tell a capital story, sing a good song, was sociable, genial, and full of what the French expressively term *bonhomie*. These things in themselves would have been sufficient to make any man popular; but, in addition, Mr. Gourlay seemed to be in possession of the purse of Fortunatus, consequently he was a power amongst his followers. Perhaps it was his seemingly unlimited resources that induced people to accept him for what he seemed, and not to trouble themselves about inquiring too closely into his antecedents. At this time Mr. Gourlay was in the very prime of life; that is, he was about forty. Now, there is little doubt that amongst the sycophants, fawners, and spongers who crowded round him there were many who could remember him when fifteen years

before he had been a clerk in a firm of well-known lawyers, at a salary of not more than eighteen shillings a week. And had they not been afraid of losing his patronage and companionship, they might have asked how it was that in the comparatively short space of fifteen years he had risen from the position of an obscure clerk to a wealthy man about town. But though Mr. Gourlay affected an outspoken honesty and frankness, he knew how to conceal his thoughts, and keep his own affairs to himself.

While no word of suspicion was ever breathed against him, he was undoubtedly a mystery, and he evidently wished to remain so, for he never volunteered any statement about himself. This gentleman, upon whom nature and good fortune seemed to have smiled so sweetly, while much attached to those things that delight carnally, displayed a very proper regard for spiritual matters, and not only was he a constant churchgoer and a strict Sabbatarian, but he was regarded as one of the most liberal benefactors of the church. The fact that he was fond of horse-racing, passionately attached to the theatre, a *bon vivant*, that he played billiards for large sums of money, and held whist parties in his own house—when heavy amounts often changed hands—was not taken into consideration. He attended the church regularly on the "Sabbath," and no appeal for church purposes was ever made to him that did not meet with a ready response. He displayed so much holiness on Sunday, that few thought of concerning themselves with his week-day doings.

I refer to this matter particularly because it serves not only to emphasize the man's characteristics, but affords another example of the power wealth has to

blunt men's consciences and cause them to regard certain sins committed by the rich man as only venial, whereas the same sins on the part of a poor man would be looked upon as deadly.

Mr. Christopher Gourlay had built himself what was almost a palatial residence in one of the fashionable outskirts of Edinburgh. The house, which was replete with every modern luxury and comfort, and furnished with a sumptuousness that a prince might have envied, stood in something like ten acres of grounds. These grounds were almost unsurpassed for beauty, and the extensive greenhouses and hothouses, which required quite a little army of gardeners to look after them, were considered a sight worth seeing, and strangers were permitted to view them every Saturday on the presentation of their cards. The owner of this grand place kept seldom less than a dozen horses in his luxuriously appointed stables; and for his own particular use he had a brougham, which was a triumph of the coach-builder's art. Of course, he kept other vehicles, but this particular brougham was so conspicuous that it never failed to attract attention when passing through the streets.

I have stated that Mr. Gourlay was passionately fond of the theatre. Not only was he a very liberal supporter of the places of public amusement, but he was generally mixed up with all the private theatricals that were given in the town. In his own house he had a miniature bijou theatre fitted up, which was probably unique in its way, and is worth describing. It was seated to hold about one hundred and fifty people. The walls were covered with quilted blue satin, over which were hung elegant looped-up lace curtains; while at intervals were magnificent oval mirrors with cande-

labra, and between the mirrors were costly vases for holding flowers. The seats were most luxurious spring chairs covered with blue velvet to match the wall decorations. The floor—over which was spread two thicknesses of Turkey carpet—sloped toward the stage, so that every seat commanded a perfect view. The roof was painted to represent an Italian sky, flecked with a few light fleecy clouds, and three or four gorgeous-plumaged birds on the wing. The proscenium was a work of art, and represented a massive carved picture-frame. The curtain was of the heaviest and costliest blue Genoa velvet, and all the appointments of the stage were perfect. Some of the scenery had been painted by artists of renown. One in particular is known at the present day the wide world over.

In this splendid little temple of the drama Mr. Gourlay was in the habit of performing some of his own pieces, for he affected dramatic literature, and was exceedingly ambitious of being known as a writer for the stage; but with one exception, and in spite of his wealth, he could not succeed in getting a piece from his own pen performed in a public theatre. It must not be supposed that a gentleman of such refined tastes, having so high a regard for dramatic art, was content to let his friends be bored with mere amateurs. He was in the habit of bringing to his house ladies who were celebrated as actresses. It will be noted that I only refer to ladies, for the fact is Mr. Gourlay had an especial weakness for theatrical ladies, and very rarely indeed invited gentlemen professionals. The ladies, too, were generally those who were noted for their youth and beauty, and it was no secret that this remarkably liberal patron of the drama was a devout worshipper at the shrine of beauty. He was, so far as was known, a bachelor, and it is not

difficult to understand how such a man, under such circumstances, should be a sort of human magnetic pole that drew to him all marriageable womankind that came within his influence. But let not the inference from this remark be that Mr. Gourlay strictly confined his attentions to those ladies who had not yet entered the bonds of Hymen. As a matter of fact, his receptions were noted for the number of young and handsome married ladies who assembled at them. And it may at once be stated here that the female sex was always largely in excess at all Mr. Gourlay's gatherings. In short, he displayed a decided partiality for the society of women in preference to that of men—he liked to reign a sole god amongst the goddesses.

There was one curious circumstance in connection with his home life that I must refer to. His mother lived with him, but her life was isolated from his. She never mixed with his company; never went out with him, never took her meals with him, and he was hardly ever known to speak to her, while she presented that remarkable phenomenon—a silent woman.

Mrs. Gourlay was about seventy, with a pleasant, rather patrician face, surmounted by a quantity of snow-white hair. This lady never received visitors, and made no calls; nor was she ever to be seen by visitors to the house. She had a carriage for her own use, and with great regularity she went for a daily drive of two hours. After that she retired to her own apartments, and was seen no more for the rest of the day, save by her own personal female servant. Mrs. Gourlay took no part whatever in the conduct of the household. That was entirely in the hands of a housekeeper, who had absolute and entire control. Mrs. Gourlay, in fact, was a mystery, and, since she never entered into con-

versation with any one, not even the servants, it seemed as if the mystery was not likely to be solved. The servant who attended to her was only a little younger than she was; and, like her mistress, she seemed to be under a vow of silence. At any rate, although she must have been aware of the intense curiosity that was evinced to know some particulars of the lady she served, she never volunteered any information, nor could any one draw her out. It was well understood amongst his acquaintances that any questions to Gourlay regarding his mother would have been resented as an unpardonable insult, so no one ventured to speak of the old lady to him. Curiosity, powerful quality as it is of the human mind, was stifled, rather than any risk should be run of losing the great man's friendship. Such is the power of gold.

Of course it can readily be supposed that a gentleman of such unbounded popularity, and of such profuse generosity, and who, moreover, seemed to have unlimited wealth at his command, would be in great request for public offices. He might not only have been Provost, but an M.P. to boot, for a constituency could easily have been found that would have sent him to the House of Commons with an enormous majority. But he resolutely declined all offers and proposals that were made to him. He preferred the *dolce far niente* to the sweets of office. A love of pleasure was his weakness, and he revelled in luxury; and to be considered and known as an epicure and Sybarite was his sole ambition. The only business connection he had was a directorship of a small bank, and the management of the branch office of a very large and wealthy insurance office, the head-quarters of which were in London. He had been associated with the bank about

thirteen years, but not all that time as a director, for he had commenced in the humble capacity of a ledger clerk. Two years later he became an agent for the insurance office, and very soon got the entire control and management of the concern.

It has been necessary for me to speak of Mr. Gourlay and his mode of life at some length and with a regard for detail, because by so doing I shall be able to make what follows more intelligible to the reader. At the period to which I am alluding Gourlay was in the zenith of his power and influence, so far as being able to attract people around him was concerned, and had any one at that time ventured to suggest he was not quite as honest as he might be, such a person would have subjected himself to a storm of indignation.

But now a curious thing happened. In the insurance office over which Mr. Gourlay ruled a man by the name of Richard Wheeler had been employed for a number of years as bookkeeper. In a general way he bore a good character; he was a married man with two children, but seemed to have a weakness for convivial society and horse-racing. Not that he indulged in the latter to any very considerable extent, but he had been known to lose as much as four and five hundred pounds at one fell swoop; and certain people naturally asked how a bookkeeper, who was dependent upon his salary, could afford to drop so much money and seem none the worse for it. The mystery, however, was explained one day when the rumour ran that Richard Wheeler had absconded, and that his books at the office showed serious defalcations. I received instructions to try and effect the arrest of Wheeler, and in order that I might get some particulars about him I waited upon Mr. Gourlay at his house. It was my first introduction

to him, and the first time I had ever been on his premises. I knew him well enough by sight, but had never before spoken to him. I was struck by his affability and general charm of manner, no less than by the princely appointments of his house. But when we came to business he astonished me by a very evident reluctance to give me such information with regard to Wheeler as I deemed necessary.

"The fact is," he said, "until the books have been thoroughly overhauled it is impossible to say whether Wheeler has robbed the Company or not. As far as I know at present, I don't think he has."

"Why has he bolted, then?" I asked, betraying the surprise I felt.

"That I cannot say. I can only conjecture."

"But what are your conjectures, Mr. Gourlay?"

"Well, I don't know that I ought to put them into words, in the absence of anything like proof, but I think you will find that domestic affairs have had something to do with his going away."

The result of my interview with Mr. Gourlay, and of what he said, was that I called on Mrs. Wheeler, and found her in the greatest distress about her husband. But my questions elicited from her that her domestic life had been very happy. Nothing had ever occurred between her and her husband that would in any way account for his leaving her. She acknowledged that he was a reticent man, and, though he denied her and her children nothing, he did not make a confidante of her, and she knew little of his affairs.

I asked her if she had never felt surprise that her husband should have been able to keep up so much style on his salary as a bookkeeper, and she assured me that she had no idea what his salary was; and she was,

moreover, under the impression that he won large sums of money on horse-racing.

Although there was nothing in the lady's manner to warrant me in thinking she was deceiving me, I did not altogether feel satisfied. But, from what I saw of her, and what I heard from other sources, I came to the conclusion that she had purposely refrained from learning anything about her husband's habits. She was content, perhaps, to believe that all was right; and, as long as she got what she wanted, she did not consider it policy to inquire too closely where it came from. Although I kept my thoughts to myself, I felt very far from satisfied with the spirit in which Mr. Gourlay had met me. As I have already said, I did not think that Mrs. Wheeler was deceiving me; in fact, I felt pretty sure that she was really in entire ignorance of her husband's whereabouts.

It appeared that the information about Wheeler's embezzlement had come from the head clerk of the office, a Mr. Philip Adair, and having failed to make anything of the manager, I turned my attention to Adair. He was a quiet, unostentatious man verging on sixty-five years of age. He had only been with the Company about two and a half years. He stepped into the position of a man who had died, and previous to getting that situation he had been a "policy clerk" in another insurance office, a post he had held for fifteen years.

I found that he, like the manager, was not disposed to be communicative, though it very soon came out that he had been cautioned by the manager not to say anything until the books had been thoroughly examined.

"But you do not withdraw your accusation against Wheeler?" I asked pointedly.

"Oh dear, no!"

"And there is no doubt about Wheeler having embezzled the funds of the Company?"

"None whatever."

"Then why are you reluctant to give me all the information you are possessed of?"

"The fact is," he answered, "after I had communicated with the police in the first instance, Mr. Gourlay was very angry with me."

"But why angry with you?" I exclaimed.

"Well, he said it was no use making the affair public until we had fully ascertained the extent of Wheeler's misdoings."

"I thought you had already done so."

"Not wholly so; and before I can do so it will be necessary to go through what we call our balance ledger, and check that with the bank pass-book, and both those books are under the control of Mr. Gourlay."

"But surely it is to Mr. Gourlay's interest to have the books examined immediately?" I remarked, my astonishment growing.

"I—don't—know that it is," answered Mr. Adair slowly, and with great stress on his words. I looked hard at him for some moments, trying to read his thoughts, and then I put this point-blank question—

"Do you suspect that Mr. Gourlay has some sinister motive in trying to screen Wheeler?"

"I am not prepared to say what I suspect," was the answer. "My thoughts are my own, and nothing can compel me to utter them unless I like. You see, I am a servant, and an old man, and I cannot afford to lose my situation. You are a detective used to unravelling tangled skeins, and you must make the best of what I have said. If you succeed in arresting Wheeler, it may probably—I only say *probably*—

be the means of bringing some startling facts to light."

"I have but one more question to put at present," I said. "Roughly speaking, what do you think the amount of Wheeler's defalcations will tot up to?"

"As far as I can tell just now, I should say not far short of five or six thousand pounds. Indeed, it may be very much more than that. My own impression is the whole business wants thoroughly overhauling. There is something rotten somewhere, but I am not going to say anything more."

On leaving Mr. Adair I felt that he had afforded me food for reflection, and, though in the meantime my only business was to arrest Wheeler if possible, I could not help feeling that if the old man was correct in his surmises, matters certainly did want looking into. Knowing as I did, however, that Adair was liable to lose his situation if what he had said to me should reach the ears of Gourlay, who was to all intents and purposes his employer—for he had the power to discharge him at a week's notice—I decided to keep my suspicions to myself for the time being.

Within a day or two, however, of that interview a new development took place in the arrival from London of one of the directors of the Company. This was Sir Thomas Aspden, a gentleman exceedingly well known in the financial world. He sent for me at once, and informed me that Mr. Gourlay had informed the Board of Wheeler's embezzlement, but spoke lightly of it, saying that so far as could then be ascertained the amount purloined was trifling. On the strength of this, the directors would not have interfered in the matter, had it not been for an anonymous letter they had received, wherein they were strongly advised to institute a

thorough investigation of all the affairs of the Edinburgh branch of the business, and above all the writer impressed upon them the necessity of using every possible means to effect Wheeler's arrest.

I told Sir Thomas that I would do all I could, and promised to communicate with him as soon as I got any clue; but on the following day he sent me an urgent request to call upon him at once, and on my doing so, he told me that the huge balance ledger of the business was missing. Consequently, an investigation was rendered impossible.

"Whom do you suspect having removed it?" I asked.

"I don't know what to say. Adair assures me that the ledger was in the strong-room just before Wheeler's flight, and the strong-room is under the control of the manager."

"That is of Mr. Gourlay?"

"Yes."

There was a question that arose in my mind here, but which I hesitated to put to Sir Thomas, until resolving the whole matter over and over, and looking at it from all points of view, it seemed to me as if it was nothing short of a duty on my part to ask it, so, turning to him, I said with deliberate emphasis—

"Sir Thomas, do you think it in the least degree likely that Mr. Gourlay has a reason for that ledger not being found?"

"God bless my life! no," he answered quickly and in what seemed to me a strong tone of indignation. "Why, we repose the greatest confidence in our manager, and though the business has not flourished, and, indeed, has fallen far below our expectations, whatever has been done is due entirely to the tact

and energy of Mr. Gourlay. We should have to put our shutters up in Edinburgh if it were not for him."

"That is your deliberate opinion?"

"That is my deliberate opinion."

In the face of this I could not, of course, proceed any further so far as Gourlay was concerned, though Sir Thomas's expression of confidence in Gourlay did not by any means remove from my mind the suspicion that had haunted me for days—that is, ever since my interview with Gourlay. As far as I could judge, his actions were not those of a man sincerely desirous of doing all he could to bring the guilt home to the suspected person. On the contrary, he had thrown every obstacle in the way of an investigation. I therefore called again on Mr. Adair, and questioned him with a view to elicit his opinion with regard to the missing ledger. But he seemed to have become more reticent than ever. It was not difficult, however, to determine that his lips were sealed with the fear of getting himself into trouble. I inferred that, whatever his suspicions—and though they might be very well founded—he was not in possession of such proofs as would warrant him in setting himself in opposition to Gourlay. At least, such was the deduction I made, and yet I should have been prepared to stake a good deal that the author of the anonymous letter that had brought Sir Thomas Aspden to Edinburgh was Adair himself. But the first thing to do was to try and get hold of Wheeler, and I now set myself seriously to work to discover his whereabouts, nor could I forget what old Adair had said—"If you succeed in arresting Wheeler, it may probably be the means of bringing some startling facts to light."

Every detective of any experience knows that in all cases of crime, if a woman is in any way connected with the case, and a clue is wanted, the woman is almost certain to afford it. That is, that though she may try in every way to screen the criminal, she will, by some incautious action, give him away sooner or later. This may be explained by the hard fact that a woman as a rule lacks the tact and caution of a man, although she is often quicker witted and keener sighted than he is. But she does not reason in the same way, and is apt to overlook small details that a man sees. Bearing this in mind, I kept a close watch on Mrs. Wheeler, hoping to find out her husband's whereabouts through her; and in the meantime, both for my own satisfaction and with a view to possibilities, I made it my business to learn all I could about Mr. Gourlay, and what I did learn I have placed before the reader in the first part of this narrative. Perhaps I need scarcely say that there were many things in connection with his mode of life and his antecedents which justified my suspicions. Those things wanted a good deal of explanation to make them seem like the acts and deeds of a thoroughly honest man. But what was most strikingly incongruous was his lavish expenditure, his princely style of living, and his costly establishment. Where did the money come from for all this? I felt convinced that if the true answer was given to the question, Mr. Gourlay would have found himself in an awkward position.

Several weeks passed without any clue to Wheeler's whereabouts being forthcoming, nor was the missing ledger discovered. The firm of accountants who had the auditing of the Company's books were deputed to investigate the matter, though they confessed themselves quite nonplussed for the want of the missing

ledger. But I learned that they were fully convinced the business needed thoroughly looking into, and they were equally of opinion that everything was exceedingly unsatisfactory. The report which they furnished to the London establishment determined the directors to overhaul the business, and as a preliminary step they requested Mr. Gourlay to go to London to attend a conference. It was during his absence that I at last got the longed-for clue to Wheeler's hiding-place.

One day Mrs. Wheeler called at a local post-office, where she was well known, and asked them to cash a ten-pound English bank-note. A day or two later she changed a twenty-pound note at the same place, and within a week she took a post-office order there for ten pounds; but as it was payable at the General Post Office, the local people, of course, could not give her the money for it, and told her she must go to the General. Now, I got to know of these transactions, and I ascertained at the General Post Office that the money-order had come from Liverpool, and the sender was given as "Emily Sinclair." I now began to think that the scent was getting warm, for I inferred that "Emily Sinclair" was the long-wanted Wheeler, and that by a clumsy blunder Mrs. Wheeler had given her husband away. I soon discovered too that the lady was making preparations for departure from Edinburgh by gradually selling off her furniture, and she had also given the necessary legal notice to her landlord to enable her to vacate her house. These things were very significant to me, and the inference I drew was that Wheeler was in Liverpool, and she was going to join him before very long.

I got to know the address of the "Emily Sinclair" who had sent the post-office order, and I found it out

in this way. Mrs. Wheeler dispatched a large parcel through a firm of carriers to Liverpool, the parcel being consigned to Mrs. Emily Sinclair, whose address, of course, was given.

I at once started for Liverpool, and found, somewhat to my surprise, I honestly confess, that Mrs. Emily Sinclair was not a mythical personage. She was considered to be highly respectable, and was the wife of a gentleman who occupied an important position in a large engineering establishment. My business now was to discover in what way Mrs. Emily Sinclair was connected with Mrs. Wheeler, and I did this by rather a bold move, and luck favoured me. I called at Mr. Sinclair's business place, and asked him point-blank if he knew a Mr. Richard Wheeler, of Edinburgh. My idea was that if he was in the secret he would betray himself by some signs of confusion, and I was hardly prepared for his straightforward answer.

"Oh, yes," he said. "His wife is my sister-in-law."

This was a revelation, a keynote to what had been obscure, and now all was plain. Mrs. Sinclair was aiding her sister.

"Do you know where Mr. Richard Wheeler is?" I asked.

"Well, I expect he is in Edinburgh. He was when I last heard of him."

"How long ago is that?"

"Two or three months, I should think."

"Are you not aware that Mr. Wheeler has left Edinburgh?"

"No, indeed, I am not." This with genuine surprise. "When did he leave?"

"Some time ago, and I am anxious to discover where he is."

"But where is his wife?"

"In Edinburgh."

"Can you not get his address from her?"

"No. The fact is, Mr. Sinclair, your sister-in-law's husband is wanted to answer a grave charge of embezzlement, and I have some grounds for supposing that he is in Liverpool at the present moment."

Mr. Sinclair fairly staggered as I made this announcement, and clapping his hands to his forehead, he exclaimed in great distress—

"My God! is it possible that Dick has gone wrong?" Then when he had recovered from the shock a little he added—"Now, then, much that has been mysterious of late on my wife's part is explained."

I saw that he was very greatly cut up, and I told him that I would not add to his grief by asking him to betray his relative by discovering his whereabouts to me.

"It is but human nature," I said, "that your wife should endeavour to render assistance to her own sister, and if you will not put her on her guard I think I shall be able to find out Wheeler's hiding-place myself."

Mr. Sinclair was so keenly distressed that it was some minutes before he could answer me.

"If Wheeler has done wrong," he said at last, "he must answer to the law for it, and it would be wrong for me to try and screen him. At the same time I greatly appreciate your suggestion, and if you can arrest him without any assistance from me I prefer that you do so. Although I can declare solemnly that I have not seen him in Liverpool, and don't know that he is here, in the light of your revelation certain movements lately on the part of my wife are fully explained, and I have no doubt she knows where Wheeler is. Under the

circumstances, and painful though my position is, you can count on my not putting her on her guard. Blood is thicker than water, it is true; but still, I think, she has done a foolish thing in not taking me into her confidence."

"No doubt she thought that you would not countenance her little deception."

"I thank you for the compliment, and perhaps you are right. Although possibly I should not have betrayed Wheeler, I should have declined to be made an instrument for endeavouring to screen him from the pursuit of justice."

I parted from Mr. Sinclair greatly impressed with his frankness and honesty, and relying on my theory about women supplying clues by short-sightedness and blundering, I set to work to find Wheeler through Mrs. Sinclair. In the course of a few days I tracked her from her house to a house in a quiet and obscure suburb of Liverpool, and in that house I soon ascertained that Wheeler, under the name of Meldrum, was living. The same night I arrested him.

"I was prepared for this," he said, in a tone of deep despair; "and yet if you had only delayed for a week I should have been on my way to America with my family."

The following day, after some legal formalities, I conveyed him to Edinburgh. He volunteered no statement, and, of course, I had no right to question him. He was terribly depressed, and I tried to raise his spirits by suggesting that by making a full and clean breast of all he knew he might possibly so far aid the course of justice that his sentence would be lightened should he be convicted. To this he preserved a dogged silence, and the subject was not referred to again.

Perhaps I need scarcely tell the reader that the legal processes in Scotland in a case of this kind are very different to what they are in England, and are more in favour of the accused person. In fact, Scotch law in many respects seems to have been framed by amateur lawyers, and often verges on the ridiculous. I have no hesitation in saying that if I stood charged with a crime I would much prefer to be tried by Scotch law than English law. Scotch sentences are always relatively lighter, while the "non proven" verdict gives the prisoner a greater chance of escape. It is a stupid verdict, and ought to be cleared off the statute book. However, in due course, Richard Wheeler was ordered for trial, but it was intimated that he would be liberated on bail, and the bail was fixed, himself in one thousand pounds, and one surety in two thousand pounds. Both were forthcoming, the surety being Mr. Gourlay. That he should offer himself was to me by no means surprising; though every one else seemed to be utterly amazed, and many people said that, since the great and good Gourlay had such faith in Wheeler, it was pretty evident the accused man's crime was not serious.

But in the meantime Sir Thomas Aspden returned to Edinburgh, and had several interviews with me, and it was soon manifest that his views with regard to Gourlay had undergone a very radical change. His faith had been severely shaken, and things had come to his ears which left no doubt that heavy frauds had been committed by somebody. Mr. Gourlay's income from his connection with the bank and the insurance office was slightly under two thousand a year, yet he was living at the rate of seven or eight thousand. Where did the difference between the two and seven or eight come from?

I had sometime before asked myself an analogous question, and had said if the true answer was forthcoming there would be a revelation. It was very clear now that the tide was turning against Gourlay, and suspicion, which had only hitherto been a faint whisper, swelled to a very audible murmur, and some of his stanchest adherents began to waver in their faith. It was the old story about giving a dog a bad name. When Mr. Adair saw that his position was no longer jecpardized he spoke his mind freely, and did not hesitate to express an opinion that the great ledger had been removed from the office by Gourlay himself. That statement did not surprise me by any means, but it did surprise Sir Thomas Aspden, though he was soon convinced there was truth in it. The result was that Sir Thomas decided that he, the accountants, and the *employés* should meet in the office in order to make an investigation, and Gourlay was asked to attend. He did so, and was subjected to severe questioning on the part of Sir Thomas and the auditors. He affected to be highly indignant at the aspersions on his honesty, and with passion and warmth he exclaimed—

"I will not remain here another moment to be insulted. If you want me, you know where to find me. I shall be at my house, and should I happen to go out, I shall leave word where I have gone to."

Having thus delivered himself, he left the office in high dudgeon, but he felt and knew that his knell had struck. For years he had revelled in all the luxury that wealth could purchase, but the end had come, and the sources of that wealth were shut off.

From the office he must have gone straight to his home, and made hurried preparations for flight, for when the next day dawned, it began to be rumoured

that both Gourlay and Wheeler were missing. Inquiry proved this to be true. They had both left the previous night. As soon as their flight was discovered, the telegraph was put in motion, in the hope that their course might be cut short before they got out of the country. But when the night came, we were without any news of their arrest, and I felt then that they had succeeded in quitting England. In the meantime, on my advice, Sir Thomas Aspden applied for an attachment of all Gourlay's property, and this was at once granted. His escape had been so well planned and arranged for, that not one of the servants knew he was going out of town; and he had not even informed his mother. When the old lady heard the news, she was stricken with what seemed mortal grief, and in her anguish exclaimed—

"I knew it would come—I knew it would come! For years he has lived on a powder mine, and it has exploded at last."

In an interview I had with the poor old creature, I elicited the fact that she had, by some means or other, been fully aware of her son's evil doings. But the mother-love was stronger than all other feelings, and she had held her peace. The dreadful knowledge, however, had preyed upon her mind, and made her a silent, unhappy woman. She resolved from the first, although living under his roof, to take no part in his gaieties, and to seclude herself from all his associates. Hence the mysterious life she led.

I next directed my attention to trying to find the missing ledger. It was a huge book, and could not conveniently have been destroyed. I discovered it at last in the lumber-room of the house, hidden behind some boxes.

As soon as the book had been returned to the office, the accountants set to work to examine it, and gradually they brought to light such an astounding state of matters that they seemed almost incredible. Gourlay had defrauded the office out of more than a hundred thousand pounds, and it was pretty certain that he had been assisted by Wheeler, although Wheeler would seem to have been nothing more than a tool. At any rate, he got a very small portion of the plunder.

Of course, if the books had been properly kept, such a gigantic fraud would have been impossible. But, astounding as it seems, the system pursued in the office was to make the bank pass-book the basis for the ledger accounts, instead of entering all transactions in the ledger first, and checking the ledger afterwards by the pass-book. Instead of the branch business having been a struggling one, as the directors in London supposed it was, it had flourished tremendously, but the money had gone to enrich Gourlay; and he had spent his ill-gotten gains in riotous living, and useless, lavish display. The means he had pursued were simple enough in themselves. He falsified the bank pass-book, destroyed the misappropriated cheques, and thus rendered discovery as long as he had control exceedingly unlikely. By some clever means, he erased figures from the bank-book, and added others in their places, so as to make the balances right. And he entered policies as having been paid, but which had not only never been paid, but which absolutely had no existence save in the ingenious and inventive brain of Mr. Gourlay. Any one with a knowledge of figures will thus see how enormous sums could be abstracted, without much fear of detection, so long as the defrauder kept his head clear, and had matters under his own

control. It is difficult, of course, to understand how the manipulated pass-book should have escaped the scrutiny of the bank officials, but that it did so is on record, and for years Gourlay's cleverness had defied detection. If there had been equal cleverness on the part of Wheeler, the two might have gone on for a considerable time longer. But he was clumsy, and had blundered, and his blundering had pricked the bubble; although Mr. Adair had suspected for some time that things were going wrong.

As may well be imagined, the discovery of the frauds caused a tremendous sensation in the financial world, and it came like a bombshell to the fawners and sycophants who had sponged on Gourlay. It is also a remarkable fact that notwithstanding the large sums of money that passed through Gourlay's hands he was heavily in debt; for, as it was believed he was wealthy, his credit was unlimited, and now his creditors were aghast, but proceedings in bankruptcy were immediately taken and a receiver appointed. In view of possibilities, he had made provision for his mother by purchasing her an annuity for five hundred pounds, and the poor old lady, with whom most people sympathized, retired into obscurity, though the shock of the *exposé* so told upon her that she was seized with sudden illness, and speedily sank, dying within two months of her son's flight.

In the meantime, no means had been left untried to bring about the arrest of Gourlay and his confederate. But it was clearly proved that they crossed the Channel and proceeded to Spain, where they were secure. When the news of Mrs. Gourlay's death, however, gained publicity, her unworthy son seems to have been stricken with remorse, and though his companion decided to remain in his safe retreat, he himself returned

to England and gave himself up. He afforded information and assistance that were the means of a large sum being recovered for the benefit of his creditors. His beautiful house, with all its superb fittings and furniture, was brought to the hammer, together with his carriages, horses, plate, and other things; but, as is always the case, the amount realized fell far short of what had been spent on them.

In the meantime, Gourlay was brought to trial in Edinburgh, and notwithstanding his weight of guilt and the tremendous loss his employers had sustained, he only received the comparatively light sentence of five years' imprisonment. But the wretched fellow knew that his life was practically done. He had revelled in sunshine for some time, but the storm had burst upon him suddenly and crushed him. The change from the life of a Sybarite to that of a felon in a criminal prison was too much for him. Unable to endure it, he one night closed his earthly record by hanging himself in his cell by means of a sheet torn into strips. That he was a clever man goes without saying, and with all his natural advantages he might have taken high and honourable position amongst his fellow-men. But he chose a course of crime as a shorter way to wealth, and found, as all evil-doers do, that there can be no happiness where there is no honesty; and that the ways of guilt are ever dark and tortuous, while the end is shame and ignominy.

Wheeler was never caught. Probably his conscience was less sensitive to remorse than his guilty companion, or his guilt being proportionately lighter did not affect him in the same way. At any rate, he did not return, and I have reason to know that his wife and children subsequently joined him abroad.

A DYING CONFESSION.

For many years Dr. William Albert Simson resided in a somewhat isolated house in the Stretford Road, near Old Trafford, Manchester, where he practised and carried on his profession. It was before Stretford Road had become one long monotonous street as it is now. At that period the houses did not extend much above the junction of the Chorlton Road, or, at any rate, what houses there were, were detached or semi-detached; and the country on either side was open and wooded. Manchester has the unenviable notoriety of being one of the most hideously ugly cities in the kingdom; but, on the other hand, it has the advantage over many other cities that rank in the same category of being possessed of most charming suburbs. The speculative builder, however, has long been doing his best to destroy all the beauty that the suburbs possessed, and the Stretford Road, as I knew it in the days of my youth, no longer exists. Its picturesqueness has been quite destroyed; the wide open stretches of fields are now covered with miles and miles of monotonous, squalid, ugly rows of houses, devoid of all architectural beauty, and maddening in their similarity to each other. The trees have all been cut down, and the hedgerows swept away, while the grimy, overgrown, dirty town has pushed its way far beyond Old Trafford itself, which was formerly a delightful bit of country. However, this is by the way, and the recollection of what Stretford Road

was at the time the case occurred that I am about to relate, and what it is now, is responsible for my remarks.

Dr. Simson was a man whom nature had peculiarly favoured, for he was a fine, handsome-looking fellow, with an exceedingly good appearance and commanding presence. Physically, it might be said, he lacked nothing that could possibly make him attractive. In this case, however, this was rather a misfortune than otherwise, for he was young — a little over thirty—and somewhat wanting in that stability of character and purpose which are indispensable to a professional man who is desirous of living beyond the reach of scandal. Simson was a married man with two young children, a girl and boy; but notwithstanding this, it was said that he was much given to flirtation, and stories were rife that female patients of his had fallen desperately in love with him, and that he had been too weak to resist their blandishments. I merely mention this for what it is worth. But it is pretty certain that he owed his subsequent troubles in a large measure to the crystallized belief that his matrimonal bonds were irksome to him, and that he sighed to be a free lance. As he was accounted clever, his practice was large, larger perhaps than that of any of his local brethren, and this in itself made him an object of a good deal of envy and jealousy, for alas! unhappily, human nature is incapable of being generous when it considers itself neglected. In Simson's case some very hard things were said about him, and there is little doubt that there was a tacit cabal amongst his local colleagues to ruin him. But he seemed to be indifferent to all this, for while his pleasant, gentlemanly manner, to say nothing of his

good looks, made him a favourite with ladies, his acknowledged ability as a medical man caused a large general demand for his services.

It would seem, therefore, as if this young medico held at that time fortune and fame at his disposal. Within certain limits this was true, but there were causes at work which were surely tending to do that which his detractors were incapable of doing, namely, to blast his reputation and ruin his prospects.

As there is no fruit so fair but it may have a worm at its core, so there is no home, however well it may seem to be ordered, but has its skeleton; and Dr. Simson's home was no exception. Indeed, it may be said that his skeleton was a very grim thing indeed, for its name was "the green-eyed monster."

His wife was older than he was, and was accounted "plain-looking" even by her best friends. Perhaps, when all the circumstances and conditions are considered, it was natural — having regard to the constitution of human nature—that the lady should be jealous of her husband. But had she been a wise woman, she would have refrained from "constantly nagging at him," as it was said she did, and from making his home-life unbearable. Whatever his faults were, it may be doubted if they were so heinous as to justify his wife in destroying his peace and happiness, and of surrounding her children with an atmosphere of discord and jealousy. But when once the demon jealousy takes possession of a woman's breast, common sense flies away. Mrs. Simson evidently considered herself an ill-used creature, and that being so, she was resolved that her husband's life should be rendered as uncomfortable as it was in her power to make it.

In the interest of this narrative it is necessary that the constitution of the doctor's household should be referred to in detail. Besides his wife and two children, there were a cook, two housemaids, a general servant, a page boy, a coachman, a stableman, and a dispensary assistant; and last, though not least, a nursery governess. The house was a large one, and no doubt his income was equal to the calls that such a household would make upon it. At any rate, he lived well, and was reputed to be "coining money." There was one very strong and disturbing element, however, in the person of the nursery governess, a Miss Phœbe Muirhead, who hailed from Glasgow. This young woman, who was possessed of considerable attractions in the shape of good looks and figure, was the cause of much heart-burning and bitterness between the doctor and his wife. Of course, it was a very old story, and a very vulgar one, and afforded one more item of painful evidence of the inherent weakness of human nature. It appeared that Mrs. Simson detested Phœbe, and wished to have her out of the house; but the doctor, with high-handed authority, declared that he was and would be master of his own household; and that, as his wife's jealousy was as stupid as it was ill-founded, he would not concede anything to her, and that Phœbe should remain. And remain she did, with the result that violent discord reigned for two years in the doctor's establishment. No prophet was needed to predict that such a state of matters could not last for any great length of time, and the culmination could hardly fail to be exceedingly disagreeable. The quarrels between the doctor and his wife grew more frequent and more violent, and they mutually separated from bed and board though living under the same roof. The

culminating stage was reached at last, when one day a quarrel more violent than usual occurred between the doctor and his wife. It arose from some very unguarded and foolish remark made by Mrs. Simson about Phœbe Muirhead; and this being resented by the doctor, an explosion resulted. It was said that he so far forgot himself as to strike his wife; but on this point there was a conflict of evidence. The doctor visited his patients as usual, returning home soon after midday, when the quarrel was renewed. It was his custom to see patients at his house from two to four, after which he again went out visiting, usually returning home between six and seven, when he dined, and if his services were not in demand he spent the evening from home. The routine was necessarily an arbitrary one, and subject to many alterations by the exigencies of his calling; but on the day I instanced it was pretty closely followed.

When he had had his dinner he went to his wife's room for the purpose, as he himself avowed, of trying to appease her wrath. But in this he was not successful, and they parted in stormy anger. He left the house saying he would be back about ten; it was then a little after eight. An hour later Mrs. Simson was seized with illness, which in a short time presented such alarming symptoms that a neighbouring doctor named Reynolds was summoned. Recognizing the urgency of the case, and yet finding a difficulty in diagnosing it, he called in the assistance of a colleague, and after a consultation they decided that the unfortunate lady was suffering from the effects of a violent irritant poison. She had already passed into a stage of delirium—collapse ensued, and in spite of everything they tried, she gradually sank and died.

An hour later Dr. Simson returned home, and it was averred that when he heard of his wife's death he seemed glad.

Of course the circumstances and suddenness of the poor woman's decease rendered a *post-mortem* examination indispensable, with the result that it was proved beyond doubt that death was due to the administration of cherry laurel water, a very powerful and irritant poison, the effects of which on the human system are extremely rapid.

In Dr. Simson's surgery there was found a bottle, not quite full, of the cherry laurel water, and critical examination proved that the bottle had recently been disturbed, and a portion of its contents taken out, while a basin that had contained soup of which Mrs. Simson had partaken gave unmistakable evidence that the soup had been poisoned, for the few drops remaining in the basin were found by analysis to be impregnated with the deadly liquid.

On the face of it it seemed clearly a case of murder or suicide, but murder being the most probable, Dr. Simson was arrested and charged with having caused the death of his wife. The unhappy life that he had led with his wife and the causes that produced that unhappiness certainly militated strongly against him, and there was a very generally expressed belief that he would be convicted. His preliminary examination resulted in his being committed for trial, which subsequently took place at the Assizes, and the whole of the pitiable story as I have related it was duly unfolded. The evidence that was tendered by the prosecution was of the most superficial, circumstantial character, and from the very first it was seen to be so weak as to render a conviction highly improbable.

Not a soul was brought forward who could swear that Simson had ever been heard to threaten his wife, who was described as an excitable and violent-tempered woman. But the prosecution urged that her excitability and violence of temper were due to her husband's conduct. On the other hand, one witness swore that the doctor was most kind to his wife, and she had heard her on more than one occasion threaten to take her own life. This witness was Phœbe Muirhead, and though she was subjected to a long and merciless examination at the hands of one of the ablest counsel of the day, who conducted the prosecution, her evidence was not shaken in the least. Of course Phœbe became an object of great interest, not only on account of her good looks, but from her self-possessed manner and her extreme coolness under the legal fire. Indeed, it was said that she was one of the most remarkable witnesses ever examined in a murder trial. Of course, the prosecution did everything they possibly could to discredit her, and an attempt was made to prove that there had been a *liaison* between her and her master, and that he had murdered his wife in order that he might marry Phœbe. This attempt, however, was quite a failure, for it was not backed up by one jot of evidence, and all the servants of the household spoke to the doctor being an exceedingly kind and good-natured man. The trial extended over three days, and resulted in the acquittal of the accused, who was most skilfully defended, and the theory set up by the defence was that of suicide. So plausible indeed was this made to appear that public opinion, which at first in its general drift had been against the doctor, completely turned in his favour, and the theory of suicide was considered by the people as being clearly established. At any rate, no jury could

possibly have convicted the prisoner on such evidence as that which was given against him, and so he went forth a free but a ruined man. That is so far as his prospects in Manchester were concerned, for after having stood in the dock charged with the murder of his wife his professional career was bound to suffer. At any rate, although there was a good deal of sympathy expressed for him, and some talk was made of a testimonial, he resolved upon quitting the town, and emphatically declined to be the recipient of any practical form of sympathy. After his acquittal he wrote a long letter to the papers, in which he entirely rebutted the charges that had been made against his honour and his character, and he expressed a firm conviction that his unhappy wife's infirmity of temper had led her to destroy her own life, and as she had a considerable knowledge of drugs and free access to his dispensary, she had no difficulty in procuring a powerful poison for her purpose. He further averred that she had on one or two occasions spoken to him of the deadly and rapid effects of cherry laurel water, and had expressed an opinion that death through its instrumentality would be extremely quick and well-nigh painless.

Now, whether his statements in this respect were true or not it is impossible to say; but at any rate his letter had the effect of causing a revulsion of feeling against him to some extent; for people said that if he was aware of his wife's likelihood to destroy her life, he should not have placed temptation in her way by allowing her to have access to his dispensary, and a good many letters to that effect were published; but he would not be drawn into any controversy, and in a little while he disposed of his practice and effects, and with his children went to

Australia. A rumour was subsequently set afloat that he had taken Phœbe Muirhead with him and married her, but this was conclusively proved to be a shameless falsehood.

Let me state here that I had nothing whatever to do with the foregoing case. I read the accounts of it in the papers, and was much interested in it as being a very human drama in which most of the worst passions of our common nature were depicted. But little did I dream then that it was reserved for me to give the grim truth of the tragedy to the world.

Ten years passed away, and the lines of my duty were cast in Edinburgh. I had, about that time, been rather prominently before the public, as through my instrumentality a gang of desperate coiners and forgers had been broken up, and most of the members brought to book. I was then living in the old town, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the College. One evening my landlady—for I was a bachelor and occupied apartments—informed me that a woman wished to see me, and on going to the door, I found an old woman there with a shawl over her head.

"You are Mr. Donovan?" she queried.

"I am," I answered.

"Well, sir," she said, "I want you for the love of God to come with me to a poor creature who is dying, and who wants to tell you something."

"What can she possibly want to tell me?"

"I don't know; but she begged and prayed of me to come to you, and ask you to see her."

"Who is she?"

"She's a lodger of mine."

"What's her name?"

"She is a Mistress Melvine, but her husband has left her. She has some sore trouble on her mind, and has drunk herself to pieces. Do come, sir, I beg of you, for I am sure she has something of great importance to tell you, if her senses only last, but all day she's been kind of raving, and I'm afraid her brain's given way."

Thus urged, I put on my hat, and followed the woman to one of the unwholesome wynds leading out of the Canongate. Groping my way up a dark, ill-smelling, and dirty stair, I found myself in a low-ceilinged and filthy room, the air of which was fœtid and suffocating, so that the first thing I did was to open the small diamond-paned window. And though the air that came in from the foul wynd was bad enough, it was infinitely better than that of the wretched apartment. The room was feebly lighted by a paraffin lamp that stood on a rickety table, but the glass of the lamp was so smoked and grimed that the light was obstructed. When my eyes got accustomed to the gloom, I saw a woman lying on the dirty bed —a haggard-faced, bleared-eyed, awful-looking woman, upon whom the green and sickly hues of death seemed to have settled. The landlady, who had accompanied me into the room, said—

"That's the poor creature, man, but she's in an awful way." Then, addressing the dying woman, she continued, "Wake up, dearie; I've got Mr. Donovan to come to you."

At this the woman gave a start, and then uttered a maniacal shriek that was positively startling, and she exclaimed—

"O God! take them off me—take them off me! They are tearing my limbs out. It's awful—awful!"

As this was evidently the raving of delirium, I turned to my conductor and said—

"What is the use of your bringing me here? The poor creature is evidently not rational; therefore what can she tell me?"

"Oh, she'll be all right directly; she takes these fits," was the answer.

Thereupon I drew a chair to the bedside, and, sitting down, touched the dying creature's hand. A shudder passed through her, but in a few minutes she turned her eyes upon me, and stared at me for some time, until at last in a positively sepulchral voice she asked—

"Who are you?"

I told her who I was, and then as she passed her withered hand over her forehead, she murmured—

"Ah, yes—oh, yes! I know, I know."

I noted then that, though worn by disease and bloated with drink, she was a comparatively young woman, and had at one time evidently been good-looking.

"Tell me," I said encouragingly and gently, "what it is you want to talk about?"

"Murder—murder!" she gasped out hoarsely.

"Murder?" I echoed.

"Yes. It's rotted me, and broken my life, and dragged me down to hell. Murder—I say it's murder—and I did it!"

I scrutinized her keenly, and felt somewhat doubtful whether this was not the mere raving of a distraught mind.

"Well, well, calm yourself," I said, "you had better not talk about it now. Let it be some other time."

"Some other time!" she shrieked, with an awful laugh. "What other time do you think there is for

such a wretch as I am? God Almighty pity me! What other time shall I have?"

As she seemed to speak rationally enough now I said—

"If you have anything on your mind, relieve yourself of it by all means; it will relieve you to tell me."

"Oh, yes, it will relieve me," she moaned; "that is why I sent for you. I cannot die until I have unburdened my conscience. I am a guilty wretch, but my secret has corroded into my soul, and the voice of conscience has goaded me to madness. I have tried to drown it with drink, but it is no use—no use. It would not be stifled."

"But what is your crime?"

"Murder, I tell you!" she cried out fiercely.

"Whom did you murder?"

"A woman."

"What woman?"

"One whom I hated," she hissed out between her clenched teeth, and wringing her hands as if in a spasmodic agony of distress.

"Why did you hate her?"

"Because she stood between me and the man I loved. It was a guilty love, for that woman was his wife."

"Well, tell me the whole thing," I remarked, as she paused and covered her face with her hands.

"Where and when was this?"

"It's years ago, years ago," she sobbed. "It seems to me as if it was only yesterday, and yet I have gone through fiery torments since."

"Where was the crime committed?"

"In Manchester."

"In Manchester!" I exclaimed, as there came back to my memory the case of Dr. Simson.

"Yes. A Dr. Simson was tried for murdering his wife. But he was innocent. I did it—I did it."

"I remember Dr. Simson's case quite well," I remarked, with growing interest.

"Did you know him?" she asked quickly.

"No, but I read the reports in the papers."

"Well, but he was acquitted."

"Yes, I know that, and it was supposed that his wife had committed suicide."

"But she did nothing of the sort," exclaimed the wretched creature, becoming excited again. "I killed her!"

"Why did you kill her?"

"Because she made his life miserable, and because I loved him."

"What is your name?" I asked, taking out my note-book.

"It is Melvine now, but then it was Muirhead."

"Oh, yes, I remember. You were a nursery governess in the family?"

"I was."

"Was there any guilty knowledge between you and your master?"

"No—as God is my judge, no. He had joked with me, and once said, 'Phœbe, if I were a single man I would make you my wife.' It was only said in fun, but the words sank into my brain. They seemed to set it on fire; and my hatred then for Mrs. Simson became so intense that the very sight of her maddened me. One day, when she had been nagging at her husband more than usual, it caused my blood to boil, and a voice seemed to whisper in my ear, 'Kill her, kill her.' I could not resist the promptings of that voice, and I resolved to do its bidding. I had heard that laurel water

was a very deadly poison, and I knew the doctor had a bottle of it in his surgery. I went there and took some out, and put it into Mrs. Simson's soup. I felt no remorse at the time. I had no compunction. And when I knew she was dead I could almost have cried out with joy."

"It is a dreadful story," I remarked. "You must have been truly mad," and instinctively, and with something like a shudder, I pushed my chair a little farther from the bed. She noticed this, and said—

"You shun me like a leper. But no wonder. I shun myself, I hate myself, I curse myself. I have cursed myself for years, and the curse has had effect. I thought when that awful trial was over that the man I loved, and for whom I had risked my immortal soul, would have married me. But he, too, shunned me."

"Did he suspect you of the crime?" I asked quickly.

"Never—never!" she cried emphatically. "He believed, poor fellow, that she had poisoned herself. And yet, though I put myself in his way, and told him that I loved him, he gave me no encouragement, and when he went away I felt that my life was blasted. I subsequently became the wife of a wretch named Melvine—a brutal, coarse wretch—who ran away three months afterwards. Since then remorse has lashed me with scorpions, and I have plunged down into the depths of infamy, hoping to find Lethe—but it's not there, not there! I don't believe I shall find it even in the grave itself."

Her distress and agitation were dreadful to behold. The whole picture, in fact, was awful, for the woman was as pitiable a wreck as I have ever looked upon; and the squalid, filthy surroundings were revolting to the senses. Although I felt a certain sympathy for the

unhappy creature who trembled on the brink of the unknown, it was, so to speak, of a negative kind, for she had committed a very cruel and very cold-blooded crime; and though I tried in my own mind to find some extenuating circumstances in her favour, I confess that I failed, for she had not struck down her victim in the fury of heated passion, but had deliberately planned her death, and deliberately brought it about, because murder by poison must be the work of deliberation. Nevertheless, I did try all I could to give her some consolation, although I was conscious of my unfitness for such an office. But it was only too obvious that death had fastened upon her, and her hours were numbered. I suggested that a clergyman should be sent for, but with a shudder she protested against that, saying she was not going to play the hypocrite in the sight of heaven, and that she could die more easily now that she had relieved her mind of its burdening secret, which she had borne so long.

She had told her story only with a supreme effort, and with great difficulty, for her voice was all but gone, and her breath came in laboured gasps. It had been very painful, indeed, to listen to her, for the physical powers were so obviously gone, and a certain amount of will power alone had enabled her to accomplish her purpose. The terrible secret that she had nursed so many years had, as she herself had expressed it, corroded her, and the once pretty and attractive woman had become an eyesore—a something that seemed to outrage the senses, and caused an inward shrinking, as it were. But still I was not so wanting in human charity as not to feel deep sorrow at this spectacle of a fellow being lying there a battered wreck—abandoned, friendless, and hopeless. It was a terrible example of

the result of human error, and one could but breathe a silent prayerful hope that the poor frail thing had already expiated her offence by the suffering she had endured through all the dreadful years during which remorse had tortured her with the torture of the damned.

For some little time she lay perfectly still and silent, save for the stertorous breathing. Her eyes were closed, the lips slightly parted, the nostrils dilated, while the hue of her haggard, pinched face was that of a corpse many days old. I had hurriedly written out in my note-book the story as she had told it to me, and I was anxious that she should append her signature to it, so I asked the landlady if she could get me a pen and ink, which she succeeded in doing after some delay and trouble. In the meantime the dying woman rallied a little, and, turning her sunken eyes on me, she murmured in such low tones that I had to bend forward to catch what she said—

"I want you to make this confession public; that is why I sent for you. I have often heard you spoken of, and I felt sure you were the right person for me to tell my story to. Let the memory of the dead Mrs. Simson be cleared, and every shadow of suspicion removed from the doctor. His wife was not a good woman. She had a low, suspicious nature, and a temper that would have maddened a saint; but still, it was no justification for my killing her."

"I will do all that I possibly can to comply with your request," I said. "I have written out your confession, and if you are capable of listening to it, I will read it, and then ask you to sign it."

"Yes, yes—read it, read it!" she exclaimed excitedly.

I proceeded to do this, and during the reading she groaned frequently and clutched the bed quilt with a

fierce, nervous terror. Before I had finished, the woman had returned with the pen and ink, and, motioning her to be silent, I proceeded to the end. Then dipping the pen in the ink I placed it in the withered hand of Mrs. Melvine, and with the utmost difficulty she scrawled her name, and fell back exhausted. I waited a little while until she had recovered somewhat, then asked her if she had ever heard from Dr. Simson.

"No," she answered, "never. If he had only given me one encouraging glance before he left, if he had only sent me one brief line since he went away, it would have put a gleam of light into my saddened life. But never a glance, never a word. I was a poor, weak, miserable fool, because I really thought he loved me. I loved him, and would have been happy as his slave. But I made a mistake, and knew it when too late. I mistook a shadow for substance, and when I had become a murderess I discovered my error."

"And did the doctor never suspect that you had done his wife to death?"

"No, never. I believe now that if he had he would have given me up to the law's vengeance. Oh, what a mad, mad fool I was!"

She had exhausted the little remaining energy again, and lay still and silent, and as the scene was very painful, and I did not see that there was anything else to be learned, I rose quietly, and left the room. I knew that medical assistance was absolutely useless, otherwise I would have procured it for the wretched creature. But I purchased some fruit and jelly, and sent it up to her, and I called upon a clergyman with whom I was acquainted, and begged him to go to the poor woman and try if possible to give her some hope, and smooth

her dying pillow. He promised to do so, and fulfilled his promise as far as the going went about an hour later; but he was too late. Death had entered before him, and placed the seal of eternal silence on Mrs. Melvine's lips. He told me, however, that the face wore a calm and peaceful expression, and something like a smile wreathed itself about the mouth, as if in the supreme moment, when the darkness of the grave was closing about her, the tired, weary eyes saw afar off some gleam of light. Perhaps it was so. God grant that it was.

As soon as possible I reported the matter to headquarters, and publicity was duly given to the dying confession, and personally I went to considerable trouble to discover the whereabouts of Dr. Simson. I found he was practising in Sydney, New South Wales, and I sent him a copy of the confession. He acknowledged its receipt in a long letter of gratitude, and said that he thanked God for his children's sake that the truth had at last been revealed.

A RAILWAY MYSTERY.

One very severe winter night years ago, when the Scotch up-express from Edinburgh to London arrived at Carlisle soon after midnight, a ticket-collector, in the performance of his duty, discovered a young lady in a first-class compartment in an unconscious condition. She was lying at full length on the seat, covered up with a rug, and with another rug under her head. The man naturally thought she was asleep, and would not have disturbed her had he not been compelled to examine and clip her ticket. As his efforts to arouse her failed, the circumstances were reported to the station-master, who, being convinced that she was ill, sent an inspector along the train to inquire for a doctor. As chance would have it, a medical man was travelling in the train, and he at once went to the compartment where the young woman was lying, and, after a brief examination, he gave it as his opinion that she was suffering from the effects of some narcotic poison, and he advised her immediate removal to the infirmary. There was a hand-bag on the opposite seat, and in the rack overhead was a bundle of shawls, wraps, and an umbrella or two. There was also a man's travelling-cap. On the floor of the carriage was found the bowl of a carved meerschaum pipe, which had been broken off from the stem, and, though it was a non-smoking carriage, there was a very strong reek of tobacco, indicating that somebody had been smoking

quite recently. As there had been a heavy snowstorm all the way from Edinburgh, the windows of the carriages had been kept carefully closed, and none of the other passengers could give the slightest information that was likely to be of service. It was pretty clear, however, that the young lady had not travelled alone, as the man's cap, the broken pipe, and the tobacco fumes were fairly good evidence that a man had been in the carriage. In order to see if any one had got out of this particular compartment, and got into another as soon as the train stopped, the departure was delayed for nearly a quarter of an hour, and the passengers questioned, but they all said that no stranger had got into their respective carriage after leaving Edinburgh.

As the circumstances were suspicious and mysterious, the police constable on night duty took charge of the effects apparently belonging to the young woman, namely, the hand-bag, and the bundle of wraps, &c., and also the cap and the broken pipe; and the compartment having been thoroughly searched but without anything else being found, the train proceeded on its way, and the sufferer was removed to the infirmary. As soon as she was taken in the doctor was summoned, and, recognizing that it was a serious case, he sent for the house physician, and it was decided to use the stomach-pump at once. This was done; and as it was pretty clear to the medical men that the poison was a narcotic, every effort was made to keep the patient awake, and all that skill and science could suggest was done to save her life, which was evidently in very great jeopardy. During the night she seemed to rally, and moaned several times the name of "Paul." One of the doctors thereupon asked her if any one had been travelling with her, but she answered incoherently—

"Oh, Paul—don't, don't—don't be cruel! Don't, dear! You know how I love you!"

"Who is Paul?" asked the doctor.

"You did love me once," she sobbed out; "don't be cruel now."

"Can you not tell us who Paul is?" pursued the doctor kindly.

A deep sigh was her only response. After a time she again rallied, and one of the nurses was instructed to question her.

"Can you tell us your name?" she asked.

Again a deep sigh was the only answer.

"Do you belong to Edinburgh?" was next asked.

"No—no," moaned the girl.

"Where are your friends?"

"Ah, don't be cruel—don't be cruel!" the sufferer repeated.

"Will you not tell us something about Paul?" said the nurse softly.

"Paul," she repeated, in a dazed way—"Paul—ah, God forgive him!"

"But where is Paul?"

"Gone away."

"Did he ride in the train with you?"

"Yes."

"What became of him?"

"He got out."

"Where did he get out?"

This question was repeated several times, and others were put, but no answer could be obtained; the girl had collapsed again, and all efforts to arouse her were of no avail. About six o'clock, electricity was tried, and seemed to be productive of some good results. But in a little while the poor girl started off and uttered

a shriek of agony that those who heard it said was frightful and made them shudder. She gazed wildly about her for some few minutes, and then, pointing at some imaginary object, screamed out—

"He has poisoned me, he has poisoned me—take him away—away—I am dying!" She fell back and was silent for a time, then her lips moved, and the doctor, bending down, heard her mumble, "I loved him so much, but he has killed me."

Her lips continued to move for awhile, but nothing coherent could be gathered, and at a quarter to seven a violent convulsion suddenly seized her, and she expired.

She was a fine, well-made, good-looking young woman, about three-and-twenty years of age, with brown hair and blue eyes, and a clear complexion. Her hands were well shaped and white, showing that she did not belong to the working class. She was well dressed, all her clothes being good, but none of her linen was marked. In fact, it all seemed to be new.

A *post-mortem* examination revealed two things: firstly, that some months later, had she lived, she would probably have become a mother; and, secondly, that every organ was perfectly sound and healthy, and, so far as the cursory examination went, there was nothing whatever to account for death. And though it was thought to be a case of laudanum or opium poisoning, the *post-mortem* signs of those drugs were absent.

All the circumstances were so suspicious that the matter was reported to the police, and a telegram was sent to Edinburgh asking that means might be taken to trace the young lady's movements up to the time of her leaving Edinburgh. On her person there was found a first class ticket from Edinburgh to London. In her purse were six pounds in gold and silver, and in a half-sheet of

note-paper was a lock of dark, rather curly hair—evidently a man's hair, by the shortness of it.

The case was put into my hands, and having wired for a full description of the young woman, and the way she was dressed, I pushed inquiries at the station, and found that two of the porters remembered seeing a young lady answering the description standing on the platform with a short, dark man, and that they seemed to be quarrelling with each other. They got into a first class compartment, which they had to themselves, as there were very few passengers. The porters were of opinion that the man was a foreigner. He was about five feet two or three, with curly, dark hair and moustache. He wore a tall cloth hat, and a big coat trimmed with fur. As nothing beyond this was forthcoming, I proceeded by the next train to Carlisle, and took charge of the lock of hair found in her purse, and also the hand-bag and other things. The hand-bag was a lady's ordinary travelling dressing-bag, and was fitted with silver-mounted articles, and contained, besides some sandwiches and confectionery, a box half-full of chocolates and a flask containing a liquid that smelt like sherry. The eatables and the wine were at once sent to London for analysis, together with the viscera and other organs, and in the meantime I set to work to try and trace the short, dark, foreign-looking man who, there was little doubt, started in the train with the young lady from Edinburgh.

I ascertained that when the train pulled up at Hawick a man answering his description was observed to leave the train, and go along the platform. The storm was at its height, and snow was falling heavily. Not a soul, however, could tell whether he returned to the train or not. Nothing whatever could be heard of him

in Hawick, where a conspicuous stranger as he was would have been sure to have attracted attention, and if he had gone on from Hawick to any other part of the country on foot he must have been seen by some one, and he could not have hired a conveyance without its being remembered. It was, therefore, suggested that he concealed himself about the station until a goods train which followed the express half an hour later, and generally stopped at Hawick for water, drew up, and then managed to secrete himself in one of the waggons. This was only conjecture, but it seemed very feasible. The luggage train did not stop after leaving Hawick until it reached Carlisle, where it waited half an hour. It then proceeded without stoppage to Leeds, and remained there for two hours. A passenger train left Leeds for London a few minutes before six, and there were other trains to Liverpool, Manchester, and various parts; so that, assuming the conjectures about the dark man's movements were correct, he had ample opportunities for getting away.

I have said that when the young woman was found at Carlisle she was lying on the seat with a rug under her head for a pillow and another rug over her. I had a strong feeling in my own mind that she had been purposely placed like this, whoever had so placed her, forgetting that the tickets were examined at Carlisle, and, no doubt, he thought that if any one looked in it would be assumed that she was asleep, and she would be quite dead before she was discovered. On examining the man's cap which had been found in the carriage, I discovered adhering to it three or four almost black curly hairs, which corresponded in every way with the lock of hair in the young woman's possession.

As it occurred to me that it was highly probable that the poor girl who, in some mysterious way, had been done to death would have some luggage, which would, of course, be in the luggage van, I went up to London to inquire of the railway people if any luggage by that particular train had been unclaimed, and I learnt that a large trunk covered with a canvas cover, trimmed with red braid, and having painted on it the initials "M. E. B.," was then lying in the lost luggage office. The probabilities were so strong that this trunk must have belonged to the young lady that I applied for permission to examine it. It was decided, however, that a week would have to elapse before the permission would be granted, and in the meantime the trunk was to be advertised in the London daily papers. This was done, but at the end of the week no claimant had come forward, and so in the presence of two of the railway officials and an officer from Scotland Yard I proceeded to examine the contents of the trunk.

It contained a considerable quantity of female wearing apparel of a good kind, and some of the linen was marked with the same initials as those on the canvas covering of the trunk. Besides the wearing apparel there was a number of things such as a lady usually carries with her when travelling, and which it is not necessary to describe. There was also a leather writing portfolio, which I proceeded to open with considerable eagerness, in the hope that it might afford some solution of the mystery. Almost the first thing that came to light was a photograph enclosed in a double leather case.

It was the photograph of a man about thirty, very dark, with full moustache, and short, crispy, curly hair. According to the name of the photographers on the

back of the card, the portrait had been taken by "Fracatelli & Cie., Milan." That seemed to corroborate the theory that the dark man who had been seen with the lady, and whose likeness this photograph evidently was, from the description of him, was a foreigner.

In one of the compartments of the case was a letter written in English on thin paper. The writing was a clerkly hand, very neat and business-like, but there were one or two phrases which pointed to the writer being a foreigner, as he was not perfectly acquainted with all the idioms of the English language. The following is a copy of the letter, which bore a date a month before that of the young woman's death, but there was no address:—

"Dear Dodo.

"I leave here to-morrow, and shall expect you to join me in Edinburgh on Thursday, as you have me promised. It is with pleasure of much greatness I forward look to your coming, when we can talk over the plans of the future; but, wherefore, Mia Bella, are you pushing me to so much trouble? Have you still no faith in me? Is it ever thus that you will not me trust? You make a great complaint, and it is not necessary. I am as ever devoted to you, but my affairs are to me of much trouble now, and sometimes my poor head goes round and round with all the thoughts that conflict. Sometimes it comes that I wish I was dead, and I think that you would be happy. You call me cruel; wherefore, Dodo, do you so call me? I am not cruel, but very full of good plans for you, but always it is that you have not patience, and you vex me with doubts. Ah, when I think of the old happy days!

Will they come no more? Do not make me weep, Dodo, but be very good and loving like your old self. Addio till we meet. Remember to tell not any one where you go. It is better not.

"Votre dévouée,

"PAUL."

The letter, unfortunately, was not enclosed in an envelope, so that it could not be ascertained where it had come from. It seemed to indicate, however, that it was a repetition of the old pitiable story of woman's trust and frailty and man's wickedness. But there was another letter which ran thus. It was dated from "Daneborough House," in a village in Kent:—

"MY DEAR MISS BURTON,

"I send you the gloves and handkerchiefs, and the scent-bottle from your drawer, as you request, and I hope you will receive them all right. There has been a little delay in sending them, because, as you are aware, I had to post them clandestinely, so as not to awaken suspicion, and, of course, I had to wait my opportunity. I do hope, dear Miss Burton, that you will come back happier and looking better. I am sure you worry yourself too much, and, pardon me, dear Miss Burton, for saying so, but I think you are bestowing your affections on an unworthy object. Of course I may be wrong in this, but, from what you have told me, I don't think Paul is worthy of you. Don't be angry with me, dear, for saying this. You know how fond I am of you; and I should so like to see you happy. I am sure lately you have looked perfectly wretched, and I have felt confident that something was weighing on your mind. But I hope all will be as you

desire. You are so good that you ought to have everything you want in this world, and find eternal happiness in the next. You may depend upon my keeping your secret. Not for worlds would I disclose it. Do let me hear from you often; and tell me soon where I am to write to you.

"Believe me to be, dear Miss Burton,

"Always your faithful friend,

"Lizzie Farley."

The foregoing letter was valuable, as it made it pretty clear that the deceased lady was a Miss Burton; that is, assuming the trunk to have been hers, and of that there could be no reasonable doubt. My next step was to go down to the Kentish village, but before doing so I received a report of the result of the analysis. That analysis demonstrated beyond all doubt that the deceased had died of a narcotic poison, but what the poison was could not be determined. It was apparently unknown. Its physiological action seemed to have been the production of paralysis of the heart and a curious thickening of the blood. It was also found that the the sherry in the flask was very strongly impregnated with the same poison, and a teaspoonful of it had killed a rabbit.

This failure to determine the precise poison added to the mystery, for it was strange that modern science should be baffled on a question of toxicology. Not but what there are plenty of poisons, in the herbal kingdom especially, the action of which is unknown, and their detection almost impossible. Fortunately, however, these are very rarely, if ever, used in this country for criminal purposes, as they are very difficult to procure.

From the very first I had put aside the theory of

suicide, and that for many well-defined reasons, and now I was convinced that it was a case of murder, and that the murderer was the man who had got into the train with the unfortunate young woman at Edinburgh, and who had so mysteriously disappeared after accomplishing his diabolical purpose. The poor girl's dying expressions, too, showed that the one gleam of intelligence left in her dazed brain was a consciousness that her false lover—for lover no doubt he was—had destroyed her life, and the task before me was to endeavour by every possible means to trace the criminal, and discover the motive for his crime. If, as seemed evident, he was a foreigner, presumably an Italian, it was likely enough he had escaped to the Continent, but I had lost no time, as soon as I got a definite description of the supposed murderer, in circulating that description all over the country. Up to that moment, however, no arrest had been made, and my supposition, therefore, that he had fled to the Continent seemed to be correct. I found that "Daneborough House" was a large boarding school for young ladies, and was situated in one of the most charming parts of the delightful county of Kent. The school was kept by two maiden ladies, the Misses Bland, and my arrival was the first intimation they had that anything was wrong.

They were shocked beyond measure when they heard the terrible news, and informed me that Miss Burton, who was a governess in the school—Mabel Ethel Burton was her full name—had left for a time on the plea of being out of health and wanting a holiday; and as she was not to return until after the Christmas holidays they had not suspected anything wrong. Her friends lived in Southampton, and it was supposed she had gone home to them. For several

weeks she had been in a low, desponding, and melancholy state. But previously she had been noted for her liveliness and cheerful disposition. They had all along felt sure that she had some trouble weighing on her mind, and though they had repeatedly urged her to tell them what it was, she persisted in declaring that it was nothing, and that she would be all right after she had had a holiday. The Misses Bland described Miss Burton as being very clever and accomplished, and of a most amiable and loving disposition. They had never heard her speak of any love affair, and they indignantly expressed their opinion that if any man had deceived her he must have been a fiend in human shape. I was disposed to agree with them in this particular, but, unfortunately, there are a great many of that class in the world; and in spite of all our boasted civilization and the spread of education, it is doubtful if human nature is one whit better than it was hundreds and thousands of years ago. There is more veneer, and the veneer is more polished; but scratch this away and the savage is revealed.

On my asking the Misses Bland if they had a young lady in the school by the name of Lizzie Farley, they informed me that she was a pupil-teacher, and I requested that I might be allowed to interview her at once. Of course this caused them more surprise, but I explained that a letter had been found amongst Miss Burton's effects signed by Lizzie Farley, and it was therefore important that I should see her.

Lizzie Farley was a bright, intelligent young lady of eighteen or so, who, when she heard of her friend's death, was inexpressively grieved, so that it was some time before I could question her. At last she was so far able to control herself as to answer my questions.

"You were intimate with the late Miss Burton?" I began.

"Yes, we were very intimate; we were almost like sisters."

"Did she entrust you with any of her secrets?"

"Yes, with a good many of them."

"You were her confidante?"

"I was."

"And she told you of her love affairs?"

"She did not until I pressed her, to know what it was that was weighing upon her mind."

"You noticed that there was something on her mind?"

"Yes; for some time she had been very despondent, and looked thoroughly miserable."

"And you urged her to tell you what it was?"

"Yes; I did."

"And she told you?"

"She told me that she was engaged to a young man, an Italian I think she said he was; but she feared that he was very fickle."

"Did she say she loved him?"

"Yes, she declared that she was passionately fond of him, but she thought he did not care for her."

"Do you know his full name?"

"No, she would only speak of him as Paul."

"Did she tell you why she went away?"

"She informed me in confidence that she had been pressing him to marry her if he did not wish her to go mad, but he had always made some excuse. At last, she was resolved not to be put off, as she had heard that he had been corresponding with a young lady in London who was said to be very rich. So she had written to him threatening to go to this lady, and he in reply had

requested her to meet him in Edinburgh so that they might arrange for their wedding."

"Did he reside in Edinburgh?"

"I don't think he did, because she incidentally mentioned that he would have to stay at an hotel there."

"You sent her some things after she left, did you not?"

"I did. She forgot a few odds and ends and wrote to me for them."

"What address did she give?"

"I think it was 28, Lamb's Conduit Street. That is the address of a friend of hers, who used to be a teacher in this school. I had to send the things cautiously, because the Misses Bland believed that Miss Burton had gone home to her friends in Southampton."

"Why did Miss Burton preserve so much secrecy about her engagement?"

"I cannot tell you that, I am sure. She seemed very averse to talking much about the subject at all."

"Do you know if she was in the habit of receiving letters from her lover?"

"Yes, I believe she was."

"Did she ever show you any of them?"

"No."

"You don't know if she left any of them behind her?"

"I am sure she didn't. The night before she left I was with her in her bedroom, and she burnt a number of letters, and some others she tied up in a bundle and took away with her."

"Did she express any intention of returning to the school?"

"Oh, undoubtedly that was her intention. She said that under any circumstances she wouldn't be married

until the New Year came in, and that very likely she would remain at the school for a quarter after she was married."

"She wrote to you after she went away, did she not?"

"She wrote me a short letter from London about the things she wanted."

"Have you ever heard Miss Burton express fear of Paul?"

"No, I can't say that I have; but I have heard her say several times that she thought he was very cruel to her."

As I had thoroughly exhausted the subject so far as Miss Farley was concerned, I did not question her further. What she had told me was valuable from two or three points of view: firstly, as having established that Miss Burton had left the school to join her lover; and secondly, as tending to prove that he must have been living in Scotland; otherwise why did he wish her to take so long a journey as that to Edinburgh in the winter time?

My next step was to call at the address in Lamb's Conduit Street, which I found was a house and milliner's shop kept by a widow and her three daughters, one of whom had formerly been a pupil-teacher at Daneborough House. Miss Burton had stayed with these people for two days. She told them she was going to Edinburgh to meet the man she expected to become a wife to, but the ladies informed me that she seemed by no means cheerful at the prospect, and during a conversation expressed a wish that she had never met him. Beyond saying that his name was Paul, she gave them no information.

From London I went down to Southampton, where her parents and other relatives lived. Her father had

formerly been an officer in the P. and O. service, but was then occupying a position in the Company's stores in the docks. Her mother, who had already heard of her daughter's sad end, was prostrated with grief, and so ill that she could not be seen. I found, however, that all Miss Burton's relatives were in ignorance about her engagement. But the last time she had visited them she had said to a married sister—

"Jeannie, I have been very foolish and very wicked, but I hope all will come right."

Naturally her sister pressed her for an explanation of this strange remark, but she gave way to hysterical weeping, and when she recovered, and was reminded of what she had said, she exclaimed, "Oh, there is nothing in it. I meant nothing." And she refused to refer to the matter again.

Up to this point, then, the mystery was almost as much a mystery as ever—that is as far as the lover Paul was concerned. No arrest had been made, and I felt confirmed in my opinion that he had escaped from the country, because, owing to the photograph, we had been enabled to circulate an accurate description of him from one end of the kingdom to the other, and the hue and cry had been very keen. In the meantime, experiments had been made with a view to discovering what the poison was that had destroyed Miss Burton's life; and a celebrated chemist had expressed a definite opinion that it was an Indian herb, which grew like a weed in the jungles of India, and was known to be very deadly. With the exception of a slight bitterness it had little taste, but so powerful was it when properly extracted and prepared, that five minutes after being swallowed its effects were felt in a strange drowsiness and great pain at the heart. As insensibility gradually

ensued, which might be in any time from half an hour to two hours, according to the strength of the dose, the distressing pain at the heart ceased, and the sufferer died from paralysis of the heart. This case was supposed to be the first time that the poison had ever been used for criminal purposes in Great Britain. Its effects after death are only traceable by a peculiar flabbiness and bloodless condition of the heart.

I may observe here that notwithstanding the evidence I had collected, and the dying girl's exclamations—which, I admit, were not of much legal value—there was a pretty strong opinion amongst a certain section of the public that the poor girl had destroyed her own life; and the leading journal devoted a column to what it considered a subtle anaylsis of all the circumstances so far as they were known, in order to prove, to its own satisfaction at least, that it was a case of suicide. But I had not the shadow of a shade of doubt myself that the mysterious Paul had murdered the girl, and the theory I constructed was that he had entered the train with her ostensibly to accompany her to Carlisle. Some little time before reaching Hawick he had succeeded in secretly poisoning the sherry in the girl's flask, or perhaps he got the flask filled with sherry at Edinburgh and poisoned it there. Anyway, between there and Hawick he induced her to drink of the poisoned wine, and she must have already sunk into insensibility when Hawick was reached, and he had covered her up so that her appearance might convey the impression that she was sleeping. That he did book to Carlisle was proved by the fact that only one ticket for Carlisle was issued by the train Miss Burton travelled by, and it was never collected. His escaping from the train as he did tended to show that his alarm became

so great that he had lost his head. If this had not been the case he would hardly have been so foolish as to have left the poisoned wine in the flask, unless he was desirous of creating an impression that she had committed suicide. But whatever the details were, the logical deduction pointed to a most deliberately-planned and cold-blooded murder.

Miss Farley had mentioned that, in the course of a conversation, Miss Burton had told her she had heard that her lover had been corresponding with a young lady in London, who was reputed to be rich. If that was true, and all the other circumstances were considered in connection with it, it furnished a pretty strong motive for the murder; but though every effort was made to discover the lady, it was without success. That, however, did not prove that she had no existence; because she and her friends might have been afraid of its being known that she had had any connection with such a man, and so they would rather let a criminal escape the penalty of his crime than aid the law by voluntarily coming forward and giving information. Such is the selfishness of human nature.

I now returned to Edinburgh and renewed my investigations there, but could learn nothing about "Paul," and at last I resolved to go to Glasgow, where there were several Italians engaged in some of the commercial houses there. I discovered a restaurant in the city kept by an Italian, who made a special feature of catering for his countrymen in Glasgow, and thither they resorted. Being conversant with Italian, and able to speak the language fluently, I frequented the place, because it occurred to me that, assuming that Paul was known to any of the Italians who went there, they must have concerted together to screen him, for, in the face of

the publicity given to the mystery, they could not all have remained in ignorance that a countryman of theirs, who was known as Paul, was wanted in connection with the crime; and, knowing this, why did they not come forward with some statement?

Of course I was not blind to the possibility that Paul had not lived in Glasgow, and so was not known there; but I had an intuitive feeling that he had resided in some part of Scotland. And all the chances were in favour of that part being Glasgow, where the Italian element was relatively strong. Anyway, until I had proved myself wrong I resolved to follow on the lines of my own reasoning.

After a few visits to the restaurant I made the acquaintance of an old man named Lorenzo Politzio, who was a waiter in one of the big hotels. I found that I could venture to speak freely to him, and so I introduced the subject of the supposed murder, and after we had discussed it for a time I said—

"Now, tell me, Signor Politzio, whom do you think this mysterious person Paul is?"

He toyed daintily with a cigarette, scratched his grey head, and then answered me—

"Well, the only person I can identify him with is a young man who was known as Paul Gancia, who came here occasionally, but has not been seen since the crime."

"You knew him?" I asked eagerly.

"I have seen him."

"And would you know him again?"

"Beyond doubt."

"Tell me, then, is that his portrait?" I here showed him the photograph, and when he had examined it for a moment or two he unhesitatingly pronounced it to be a likeness of the man he had known as Paul Gancia.

This was another step onward, I thought, and I felt now that I was on the murderer's right track, though whether I should run him down or not was another thing. But I was hopeful.

"Do you know anything further about Paul Gancia?" I asked.

"I did not know much about him, for he was a very quiet and reserved man. But I understood he was in the employ of W—— Brothers, merchants in this city, who do a large Italian trade."

The following morning I was at W—— Brothers' warehouse betimes, and there I learnt that a Paul Gancia had been in their service for two months, but had suddenly thrown up his situation, saying that he was obliged to return immediately to Italy as his father had just died and left him a small estate. He had gone to them from an Italian house in London, and been highly recommended. Shown the photograph, they recognized it at once, also his handwriting. On my asking them why they had not come forward to give information to the police, their excuse was that they did not associate Paul Gancia for a moment with the "Paul" who was wanted.

It is such stupidity and pig-headedness as this which so often baffles the police in their endeavours to hunt down criminals.

I had no difficulty now in ascertaining that Paul Gancia had occupied lodgings in the house of a Mrs. Bremner, who lived in West Mill Street. When he went away he told her that he was going up to London on business and might be absent for some weeks, but that he would keep his apartments on, and he paid her three weeks' rent in advance. He had taken most of his things away, but had left a small black bag and a

few small articles in the cupboard of his bedroom. Amongst these small articles was a phial containing about four ounces of a clear fluid that was almost the colour of sherry. I took charge of this, and lost no time in sending it to the London analyst who had analysed the other things; and in due course he reported that it was a herbal narcotic poison, identical with the poison found in the sherry and in the fluid that was taken from the stomach of the deceased young woman. From actual experiment on animals it was found to be very deadly in its nature, producing speedy insensibility and death. A botanical expert, who had been many years in India, recognized it as a decoction of the Indian herb to which I have made reference, but which it is not necessary I should mention the name of here. Although the herb had been brought to England for botanical collections, he had never heard before of the decoction being in England, and it was a mystery how Gancia had become possessed of it. It was possible, of course, that he might have procured the leaves of the herb and have made the decoction himself, by macerating them in alcohol, but that argued a knowledge on his part of the deadly nature of the drug.

Armed with the facts I had gathered up, I proceeded again to London, and sought an interview with the principal of the firm that had employed Gancia. He had been with the firm for a little over four years, and was about twenty-seven years of age. He was a native of a little town in Lombardy, not far from Milan, and previous to going to London he had been employed at a wholesale chemist and druggist's in Milan. It was there, no doubt, that he had obtained his knowledge of the properties of the herb which he had used to take the life of his unfortunate victim, Miss Burton.

There was now no longer any doubt that Paul Gancia was the murderer, and I applied for a warrant for his arrest. Armed with this and the necessary documents to place in the consul's hands, so as to ensure his extradition should I be able to capture him, I started for Italy.

I found that his people were very respectable. His mother, though born in Italy, was the daughter of an Englishwoman, and she had called her son Paul after a brother of hers. I ascertained that their son had recently been home, but had gone away hurriedly again, and they did not know where he had gone to. They were in great distress about him, as he seemed so terribly unhappy when he was at home. They had not heard of the murder, and were anxious to know why I was making inquiries about him. But I deemed it prudent not to satisfy them. By pushing my inquiries in other quarters, I ascertained that the parents were not truthful in saying they did not know of their son's whereabouts. Suspecting that he had been guilty of some crime, they were trying to screen him, and he had sent letters to them from Milan, and they had written to him. Through means of the post office I found out his address, and posted off to Milan, but he had already been warned and had fled. I got on his track, however, and procured evidence that he had proceeded to Switzerland, and was probably in Geneva, where he had an uncle who kept an hotel. That afternoon I started for Arona, at the foot of Lake Maggiore, and at midnight I left the little town of Arona by the diligence for the Simplon Pass, which I crossed in a terrible snowstorm, and had to seek refuge for a day in the hospice on the summit. When the storm abated I proceeded on to Brigue, where I took a train down the Rhone valley for Geneva. On arrival there, I heard

that the fugitive had been seen at his uncle's house; but probably he had again been warned, for he had once more fled. But I again got on his track. He had gone to Coire, the capital of the Grisons, and thither I followed. But he had only made a brief stay in Coire, and had proceeded to Bellinzona in Italy, so I crossed the Splügen and Bernardine passes for that quaint and picturesque old town. I had previously telegraphed to the police asking that the fugitive might be arrested. I had done the same thing in Geneva, but he had managed to slip the authorities there. So he did in Bellinzona, but it was in another way. He had taken lodgings in a *café*, and, becoming aware by some means or other that the gendarmes were after him, he fled from the *café* by a back entrance. Being hotly pursued, he made for the Pont du Tessin, which spans the impetuous Tecino, and, realizing at last that escape from man's justice was hopeless, he leapt on the parapet of the bridge, and, with a wail of despair, plunged into the swollen and thundering torrent. His body was not recovered for four days, when it was found mangled and crushed amongst the jagged rocks some miles below the town.

Although he had thus defeated earthly law, and I had not succeeded in taking him alive, I felt as I wended my way leisurely back to England that poor Miss Burton's cruel death had been amply avenged; but there was still mystery in connection with it that was never likely to be cleared up. In pursuing her slayer from place to place I had passed through many magnificent scenes, which were sternly grand and solemn in their winter robes, and often I had wondered to myself how it was that in God's fair earth, which is so very beautiful, man should be so vile and cruel to his fellow-man.

SPRINGTHORPE'S LAST FLUTTER.

He who wants to see how nature and art, working sympathetically hand in hand, can produce a Paradise, must visit Monte Carlo in the midwinter season. At that time the air is languid with the perfume of the orange and lemon blossom. There are flowers everywhere; the sky is a rich lapis lazuli; the background of mountains—which are such a conspicuous feature at Monte Carlo—stand clearly out in the crystalline air, every outline, curve, and ridge being sharply defined; and at no other time of the year does the treacherous Mediterranean look so syren-like—so deeply, richly blue, so tranquil and dreamy, as it flashes and scintillates like a field of diamonds in the brilliant sunlight. The palms, the capsicums, and the peppers, their vivid greenness as yet unsullied by the parching heat and dust which mars them later on, lend a tropic luxuriance to the foliage; and turn which way the eye will it meets such a wealth of colouring that it becomes satiated. And amidst all this beauty loiter and lounge richly-dressed women and men, who—if one were to judge by external appearances only—are without a care in the world.

In this place stands one of the most seductive temples that man has ever reared as an altar on which his fellow-man may sacrifice to the god of mammon. The marble walls, the porphyry pillars, the tessellated floors, the gilded ceilings, the massive velvet curtains with their

loopings of gold, pander to the sensuousness of the visitor, and bewilder one with their very richness. But the majority of people who flock to these marble halls are simply blind devotees of mammon, and the "aura sacra fames" lures them to their destruction, as the honey-pot lures flies. The roulette tables and the trente-et-quarante rooms are the gods before whom they prostrate themselves, and to them they are willing to sacrifice their hearts and souls.

To this place we will introduce the reader on a brilliant day in February. It is the height of the season, and the gaming rooms are crowded with men and women of all nationalities. There are young and old, the maiden in her teens, the beardless youth, the wrinkled and the gnarled, the bald-headed and grey-headed; and on all the faces—youth and age alike—is either a look of intense nervous eagerness or of wild despair, according to whether fortune has gone in favour of or against the worshippers of this modern Baal. Around every table is a surging, jostling, anxious crowd; those outside struggling and pressing so as to get near enough to put their money down at the cry of the officiating priests—"Faites vos jeux, messieurs et mesdames." But there is little noise, for strict silence is enforced, though sometimes a deep sigh floats upwards, or a muffled oath escapes from some unhappy wretch who has wooed fortune in vain.

But it is in the card rooms devoted to trente-et-quarante where the most impressive silence reigns. Seated at the green baize tables the gamblers watch with strained and bloodshot eyes the cards as the dealer lays them down in a double row before him; and when the game is called, those who win clutch the money that is pushed towards them with the greed of the

miser, while those who lose part with their pile with compressed lips and knitted brows.

At one of the tables a young man sits—handsome of face, and yet it is marked with "the world's slow stain." He is fair, with a mass of curly light hair falling over his white forehead. A drooping moustache only partially conceals the mouth, that in its curves and lines speaks too surely of a weak, vacillating nature; and this is borne out in the thin, quivering nostrils and the restless blue eyes. As yet he can scarcely have passed twenty-five years of life; nevertheless, there is something about him which is suggestive of one who has played recklessly with his years, and frittered away the golden gift of youth. Reginald Springthorpe—for that was his name—had been carefully nurtured and tenderly brought up, and succeeded to what is so often a heritage of woe to a young man—a large fortune. His father had been an honoured and successful merchant in the city of London. Dying when his only child Reginald—who was also motherless—was little more than an infant, he left him a fortune of nearly a hundred thousand pounds, which he was to obtain full possession of when he became of age. His guardian, a God-fearing and rigid man, had done his best to fit his ward for bearing the grave responsibility of wealth; but the lad was naturally weak in disposition, and during three years which he had spent at Oxford he had given way to such extravagances and excesses that his guardian was filled with anxiety, and could he have done so he would have withheld the fortune until the young man had gained a little more wisdom. But wisdom and Reginald Springthorpe were never likely to be closely acquainted, for as soon as ever he attained his majority, and became free to

deal with his money as he liked, he snapped his fingers at all those who ventured to give him advice, and seemed to have determined on furnishing the world with another strong proof of the adage that a fool and his money are soon parted. His inheritance included a small residential estate in the West End of London, and here as a gilded youth, weak and vain, he attracted round him a coterie of flatterers and fawners, and he developed a fatal weakness for gambling. His life during the three years that followed was an outrage against nature and common sense. But some of his friends said, "He will be all right when he gets a little older, and especially if he marries a woman who will take an interest in him and endeavour to wean him from his follies."

About a year before we meet him at Monte Carlo he had made the acquaintance of Ethel Verebrook, the daughter of a retired naval commander, who was very highly connected. Ethel was a beautiful and charming girl in every sense of the word. At first her parents set their faces against Reginald, in spite of his reputed wealth; but when they found that their daughter was desperately in love with him, they conquered their objections and consented to his paying his addresses to her. The Verebrooks were spending the winter in the Riviera, and were sojourning for a time at Monte Carlo, and Reginald Springthorpe had just come out from England to join them there. He had promised his betrothed that he would not go near the gaming tables, but the promise was not kept. The fascination was too strong, and he was too weak, and so he had stolen into the Casino to have, as he termed it, a little "flutter" at the card table.

He had been playing for two hours, and had lost heavily, and at last, rising, pale and agitated, he put on his hat and went forth into the brilliant sunshine, where all things seemed so glad, so bright and beautiful. He hurried to the grand palm-fringed terrace that overlooks the sea, where he was to meet Ethel, and where she had been waiting for some time. She was a woman of whom any man might have felt proud. Tall and graceful, with a girlish figure and a face that was sweetness itself, she was a prize well worth the winning.

"Well, truant," she exclaimed, as her lover hurried up, "why have you kept me waiting so long?" Then, as she noticed his agitated manner and look of anxiety, she added, "Reginald, I believe you have broken your promise and have been into the gambling-room."

He laughed, but it was a laugh without laughter in it, as he answered—

"I have, dear—I won't deceive you. But do not be angry with me. I just went in to have a little flutter and to pass an hour away."

"And you have been losing?" she remarked anxiously.

"A few francs," he replied, with an assumed air of indifference. "But there—it is nothing; don't let us talk about it any more."

"Ah! Reginald," she sighed, "it is unkind of you. You promised me, and you promised my father, that you would never gamble again. If he should come to know of it he would not forgive you. Why do you not strive to cure yourself of this fatal weakness? For my sake—for your own sake—you should do so."

"Darling," he said pathetically, and with seeming earnestness, "let your reproaches cease. For your sake I would lay down my life, and I promise you I will give you no cause for sorrow again."

"Dear boy," she answered proudly, as she caressed his hand, "I will trust you with all my heart and soul. For I love you, Regi—trust you—heaven knows how strong and deep is my love—and when a woman loves truly, she has no room for doubt."

The anxious look in his pale handsome face deepened at these words, and he turned away as if to hide his face from her. And then, in a faltering voice, he said—

"Ethel—heaven has been far, far too good to me, and sometimes I wish that I had never met you."

"What do you mean by that, Reginald?" she asked quickly, and with a painful intensity of expression.

"I mean, dear, that I am not worthy of you."

"If you will be true to yourself you will be worthy of me," she answered reprovingly. "A true man should be able to conquer his weaknesses. You can mar or make the happiness of us both by a very little. If my love is worth having, it is worth making some small sacrifice for. That sacrifice is the breaking off of vicious habits——"

"Oh, Ethel," he exclaimed appealingly, and with apparent sincerity in his tone and manner, "do not wound me like that! The habits shall be broken off—I am yours, I will devote my life to you. I will endeavour to be all that a man should be to the woman he loves. Forgive me for the past—trust me for the future."

"I do," she answered softly, closing her gloved fingers round his arm in a loving pressure. "But come, let us return to the villa. Mamma is going for a drive, and I promised that I would take you back to join her."

"Let us go, then," he replied, as he drew her arm further through his. But he seemed somehow as if he were afraid of letting his eyes meet her eyes, and the look of settled anxiety departed not from him.

Mrs. Verebrook occupied apartments in the Villa Florio, that stood on the slope of a hill and commanded a full view of the wide blue sea, and of the picturesque mountains that overshadow Mentone and Bordighera, and fade away into dreamy mistiness in the far distance. The carriage was already waiting at the door, and the lady chided the lovers for lingering. But Ethel made an excuse which found acceptance, and her mother was satisfied. The drive taken was along one of the roads that lead into the mountains, and which every now and again afforded glimpses of the distant, snow-clad Alps, glittering in the sunlight, and peeps into the smiling valleys where the rushing streams glimmered like molten silver. Reginald Springthorpe tried to appear cheerful and interested, but it was a sorry attempt, and it was only too obvious that he had something on his mind. His preoccupied, abstracted manner clearly showed that, and these signs did not escape the notice of Ethel.

When they returned from the drive, and while they were together in the drawing-room, she suddenly threw her arms round his neck, as if prompted by some irresistible impulse, and looking up into his face, with tearful eyes she said, with every manifestation of distress in her tone—

"What is it, dear, that is preying on your mind? All the time we have been out I have watched your sad, sorrowful face, which betrays too surely that you are not happy. Ah! Regi, why are you such an enemy to yourself? Fortune has smiled upon you, and nature

has favoured you, and yet you crush the flowers of your life beneath your feet, and turn what should be a smiling garden into a wilderness."

"Oh, Ethel," he exclaimed as he clasped her to him with an excess of nervous energy, "how your words cut me to the very heart's core! I have been a mad, blind fool, and know that I am all unworthy the love of one so good and true as you are. I have something on my mind, but I cannot, dare not tell you what it is. Later on, perhaps, I will do so. But so conscious am I of my unworthiness of you, that I feel I ought to go away, and never again look upon you."

"If you did that, dear, I should die," she answered softly, but with a strange earnestness that could not fail to impress him; and she added, "Why speak so despairingly of yourself? You have youth yet, and your happiness is in your own hands."

"It *was*," he replied, laying emphasis on the "was," as if he wished to imply some special meaning; "but I have trifled with it, and I fear now it has gone from me for ever."

"Oh, nonsense!" she replied, trying to look cheerful and speak lightly, "you are in a morbid frame of mind, and must arouse yourself. It is not good for a young man to talk as you do. Besides, for my sake—and you say you love me—you must be happy and cheerful. Think of what we are to each other, and remember you hold in your hand not only your own life and happiness, but mine. The day after to-morrow, as you know, we leave here, and return to Cannes. You must go with us. Supremely beautiful as this place is, it is not the place for you. You will leave with us, will you not, and spend the remainder of the season in Cannes?"

"Yes, yes," he faltered, "and yet, and yet——"

"And yet what?" she asked as he seemed disinclined to say what he intended to say.

"I wish that you would give me up, that you would try and forget me," he replied.

She started from him, and her beautiful face flushed red with emotion.

"Reginald Springthorpe," she said, "do you really mean that?"

"I do," he replied in a low voice, and not daring to look at her.

For a moment she stood as if she had been deprived of the power of speech or motion, and the colour faded from her cheeks, leaving them pale as marble. Then she spoke, and there was a pitiable ring of anguish in her voice—

"If I really thought that you wished me to give you up——"

"I do wish it," he said, still keeping his face averted.

Her bosom rose and fell with emotion as she continued—"You do not love me, then—your love is given to another?"

"Yes," he murmured. "I have been fascinated by a syren, and I have been too weak, too cowardly to resist. She has lured me to my ruin. Therefore let me go from you, and curse me if you like. Yet on my knees would I ask you to forgive me."

She was deadly pale now, and her lip quivered, so that she bit it to hide her emotion. She drew herself up with a certain hauteur, and the anger of insulted pride flashed from her eyes. But it was some moments before she could trust herself to speak, and then she could only command her voice by a supreme effort, for she had mistaken his meaning and thought that a rival stood in her way.

"Go!" she said coldly. "I shall utter no curses against you. But you have trifled with and broken my heart, and your own conscience will be sufficient sting. I have dreamed a dream, but am awake now, and know how you have befooled me."

He tried to speak, but the words he would have uttered were strangled in his throat. He made a motion as if he would have taken her hand, but she shrank from him, and the anger-light in her eyes became more intense, as she repeated the one word "Go!"

And so he passed out of the room, and when the door had closed behind him Ethel's anguish found vent in a great sob, and falling on to a couch, she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly. And thus she was found by her mother a little later on.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Mrs. Verebrook, in amazement.

"Mother," answered her daughter, rising up, "Reginald and I have parted. He loves another."

"Has he told you this?" asked the lady, in hot indignation.

"Yes."

"Then are you not ashamed of these tears? Have you no pride? If this man has deceived you he shall be punished. When your father returns from London he shall horsewhip him and expose him. But shed no tears for a worthless scamp who has dared to make a fool of you."

Mrs. Verebrook was very angry indeed, for her pride was outraged, and she could not control her feelings. Knowing this, Ethel refrained from entering into any argument.

In the meantime, Reginald Springthrope made his way back to the hotel at which he was staying, and

shutting himself in his room, he gave way to the anguish that tortured him.

"Oh, what a fool I am!" he moaned. "I have been mad, absolutely mad, but am sane enough now, when it's too late. And now I see the ruin and misery that have fallen upon me—ruin, misery, and perhaps death. Well, a man can die but once, and better dead than living when all has gone, including honour. How cruel, too, I have been to Ethel. Will she ever forget me, I wonder? Perhaps she will. I wanted to say so much to her just now, but when I would have spoken words failed me, and I fear she has put a wrong construction on what I did say. I would have explained, yet I could not. But she must know the truth—must know that I love her better than my life, and in giving her up I condemn myself to torture."

When he had grown a little calmer, he sat down and penned the following note to her:—

"Judge me not too harshly, dear one. The strength and measure of my love for you cannot be gauged by words. But I am a wrecked and ruined man, and have little to hope for, save it be that in one last turn of the cards or throw of the dice I can retrieve honour and fortune. It might be so, and then—ah, then! would love find its reward. Hope is the last thing to die, and though now I seem to be plunged in darkness, there is a tiny gleam that shines athwart my path. To-morrow this gleam shall either be expanded into a broad ray of light or extinguished altogether. Till then, adieu. Perhaps we shall meet again. But to-morrow decides my fate."

Having finished this letter, he sealed it up ready for posting, then he took out his pocket-book from his

pocket, and opening it he revealed a packet of bank-notes, which he proceeded to count.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds," he muttered, when he had completed counting them. "It is not much, and yet may it not retrieve everything? When a man casts his all upon a last flutter, is not fortune likely to favour him? To woo fortune one must be brave and bold. To-morrow, then, decides my fate."

That night he posted the letter to Ethel Verebrook; and he strolled for some time alone along the beach on which the tideless sea broke in creamy wavelets. It was a heavenly night, picturesque clouds moved slowly across the star-studded sky; and a nearly full moon shining on the moving waters turned them into a seeming network of filagree silver. Dreamy music from the band, as it played in the gardens, was borne on the breeze; and the languid odours of the orange-blossom saturated the air. The whole scene was one of wondrous beauty. It was all like a land of enchantment, or the realization of some description from an over-coloured fairy tale. But to the magnificence of the scene Reginald Springthorpe was indifferent.

He saw nothing but the devious way of his past and misspent life, and the impenetrable darkness of his future, for certainly at that moment his future appeared dark enough.

The morrow came full of the grandeur which the night had promised; up rose the flaming sun from out the sea, and, flinging his broad beams over that earthly paradise, gilded even the gold and made even the lilies fairer.

Dull and mournful, Reginald Springthorpe took his way to the Casino, at about the same time that Ethel Verebrook received his letter. She had passed a rest-

less and wretched night; and when the morning came, she rose feeling as if life for her had lost its zest, and the world its interest. Her lover's letter astonished her, and she saw the whole matter in a very different light to that in which it had presented itself the day before. And at once she determined to make an effort to save him from himself; for she thought that his main trouble was that he had exhausted his resources at the gaming table, but she did not gather that he was totally ruined.

As soon as she could get away from her home she went to his hotel and inquired for him, but was informed by a waiter that monsieur had gone to the Casino. She was terribly distressed, for she was at a loss how to communicate with him, as she hesitated to go alone into the gambling rooms. For some time she sat under the trees in front of the grand entrance in the hope that she might see him come out. But he did not appear, and she was compelled to return to her home disconsolate.

And while she waited and yearned for him, Reginald had gone to the card room and secured a seat at one of the tables. A look of desperation was in his eyes; he knew that this was to be his last flutter, win or lose, for he had made a solemn vow that under no circumstances would he ever gamble again. Nervously and anxiously he watched the cards dealt out, and he staked a fourth of the remnant of his fortune, and when the numbers were called he found he was a winner.

It was like an intoxicating draught of strong liquor. It inflamed and excited him, though he made a desperate effort to appear cool and collected. He staked heavily, and again and again he won, until he was in possession of a sum of three thousand pounds.

But what was that to a man who had squandered in four years a fortune of a hundred thousand? So he went on playing, and it seemed as if the Fates were smiling upon him at last, for his pile increased, until his winnings amounted to six thousand. The intense and eager excitement under which he laboured manifested itself in the unnatural brilliancy of his eyes, and the hectic flush on his pale face. He turned to one of the attendants, and requested to be supplied with a glass of iced water, and when the request had been complied with, he resumed his desperate game. For one or two rounds he did not stake, but simply watched how the cards fell. Then he put all he possessed on one coup, and once again the cards went in his favour, and his stakes were doubled. At last the tide had turned, he thought, and he saw a new era dawning for him, a new and better life with the woman he loved by his side. Nobler aims and higher aspirations would stir him, and he would yet cover himself with honour and renown.

But while he dreamed this dream, a hand suddenly tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and somebody said in English, "Reginald Springthorpe, I have something to say to you. You had better come outside."

He turned sharply, and beheld a thick-set, dark-complexioned, and determined-looking man standing behind him. At the sight Springthorpe grew deadly pale, and a nervous tremor caused a twitching in his face, which was filled with an expression of pitiable despair. In a few minutes he seemed to recover himself a little, and with a sickly smile said, in what was little more than a whisper—

"You must not make a scene here. I will have the last flutter, and then I shall be at your service." As

he spoke, he pulled from his pocket the large roll of notes, and, watching the dealer deal the cards, he plumped the whole amount on the one coup. At that supreme moment the fortune that had mocked him by smiling deserted him, and the croupier's rake drew in the pile of notes. Reginald Springthorpe's last flutter had beggared him.

He rose slowly, like a man who was dazed and stupefied, and from his waistcoat pocket he drew what seemed to be a lozenge, and put it into his mouth, Turning from the fatal table, he said to the dark man, who was close by his side—

"I guess your errand."

"No doubt," answered the man. "I am Maurice Fabian, an English detective, and I hold a warrant for your arrest for forgery. As I have gone through the necessary formalities with the authorities of Monaco, there is nothing for you to do but to accompany me to the station, and we will depart for London."

A strange smile lit up Springthorpe's ghastly, pallid face as he answered—

"You are wrong, Mr. Maurice Fabian. I have yet one other thing to do before I accompany you."

"What is that?"

"You shall know anon if you will accompany me to my hotel."

"I do not intend to lose sight of you; and if you will allow me to search you and satisfy myself that you have no weapon of any kind, I will go with you to the hotel, and you will have plenty of time to gather your things together."

Springthorpe submitted to the search, but nothing save a penknife—which the detective took—was found upon him. Then lighting a cigar, he went out of the

gilded hall, followed closely by Fabian, and descended slowly, and as it seemed painfully, the marble steps. The sun was declining and bathing in golden fire the whole of the marvellous landscape. As he moved along under the trees a woman suddenly rose up from a seat near, and breathed his name. It was Ethel Verebrook. He staggered, and the cigar fell from his lips.

"Ethel," he muttered, in a hollow voice, "why are you here?"

"To see you—to save you," she answered.

"It is too late—too late," he replied, in a whisper. "I am this man's prisoner for the moment, but my release is at hand."

"His prisoner!" she gasped.

"Yes. But leave me, dear one. Farewell! We shall meet no more in this world."

"You are mad—mad!" she cried. "I will not leave you!"

He suddenly put his hand to his heart as if some deadly pain had seized him, and he gasped for breath. The band was playing Weber's Last Valse, and a gaily-dressed crowd, laughing and chattering, swarmed round the band-stand. As Springthorpe seemed as if he would fall, Ethel took hold of his arm, and the detective supported him by the other, and thus they led him across the gardens to the hotel, and he was taken into one of the sitting-rooms, where, unmindful of everything else, save that she loved him, Ethel fell at his feet as he sank into a chair, and with a passionate moan she cried—

"Oh, Reginald, what does this mean? Tell me—confide in me—let me comfort you."

Speaking with difficulty, he said—

"This gentleman," indicating Fabian, "will answer one part of your question."

"I am entrusted with the painful duty," said Fabian, "of arresting him on a charge of forging a bill for £5,000."

"It is a libel—it is false. I cannot, will not believe it!" cried Ethel, in pitiable distress. "Reginald, speak—say that it is not true!"

"It is true—quite true," he gasped, with great difficulty, for he seemed as if he was being strangled.

A shiver ran through the beautiful girl, and the pallor of her face almost equalled his. Then with a muffled scream she flung her arms about her lover's neck, and exclaimed—

"Reginald, what is the matter with you? You are ill—you are dying!"

He turned his glazing eyes upon her, and as a spasm of pain passed over his features he murmured—

"It is the last flutter." Then addressing the detective, he said, with a sad smile, "I told you I had one other thing to do before accompanying you to England. That is—to die."

He never spoke again. He gave two or three gasps, his breast heaved convulsively, a shudder shook him; then he was still—dead. He had died by his own hand. In that lozenge he had put into his mouth at the gaming table was a powerful poison. He had played his last stake, and the detective saw that the law had been cheated. Reginald Springthorpe had gone to a higher tribunal.

Outside, the band was playing the last bars of the valse, joyous laughter rose on the scented air, the sun sank lower, and the gold deepened and gradually

changed to purple shadows that crept over the hills, and lay upon the sea.

With difficulty Ethel was separated from her dead lover, who was buried the following day at Mr. Verebrook's expense in the exquisite God's Acre where the dead lie who die in Monte Carlo.

Ethel returned with her parents to England, but for a long time she hovered between life and death, and grave fears were entertained that she would not recover. Gradually, however, she came out of the shadows, and in the course of time another wooed and won her. And though her heart was seared, she found happiness and joy at last in the love of a good husband and sweet children.

MRS. O'FLAGGERTY'S "JOOLS."

When I was a very young man, and soon after I had joined the London force, I had a somewhat farcical experience. My name had been prominently before the public for several weeks in connection with a band of malefactors who had been engaged in extensive coining operations. I was fortunate in being able to bring this band to book, after a great deal of trouble, and in the face of many difficulties that seemed to shut off all hope of success. However, I did succeed, and the result was some distinction; to this fact, I suppose, I must attribute my connection with the following case.

I was informed one morning by my chief that a report had been lodged at head-quarters of a robbery of jewellery, valued at something like a hundred and fifty pounds, and I was instructed to "look into the matter." The man who had complained of being robbed had left his card, which was handed to me. It was a somewhat pretentious-looking bit of pasteboard, on which the following was printed—

Mr. BARNEY O'FLAGGERTY
(*From Tipperary*),
RAG AND BONE MERCHANT.
The highest price given for old boots and shoes, old umbrellas, old clothes.
N.B.—Me and me wife waits upon ladies and gentlemen daily. Distance no object.
Testimonials from the Aristocracy.
Notice.—Only address, 279, Goswell Road, London.

This certainly smacked of business and enterprise, and I felt that the gentleman who dealt in rags and bones, and who boasted of testimonials from the aristocracy, was worth knowing, so I took the earliest opportunity of waiting upon Mr. Barney O'Flaggerty, from Tipperary.

I found that he had extensive premises, packed with as miscellaneous a collection of rubbish as it is possible to imagine. Perhaps the word "rubbish" is not quite correctly applied here, because the rooms full of old clothes, boots and shoes, battered, old and shapeless hats, distorted and mangled umbrellas, rags white and coloured, *et cetera*, represented, no doubt, a very considerable sum of money. At the back of the premises was a wooden shed, over a hundred feet long, containing great heaps of scraps of iron, tin, lead, brass; rusty old screws and nails, and such-like unconsidered trifles, which, in most households, are looked upon as a nuisance, and are swept out, or collected, and sold by the slaveys for a few halfpence to the "rag and bone man." From Mr. Barney O'Flaggerty's surroundings—his well-furnished house, and the general air of comfort which pervaded his establishment—it was pretty evident that this trade in "rubbish" paid him well.

Mr. O'Flaggerty was a little man, with a rotund figure, a bullet head, with hair cropped *à la* blacking-brush fashion, a florid complexion, and merry twinkling little eyes.

"Yez see, Mister Donovan," he began, "it's this way. Sez Oi to the woife, sez Oi, when we diskivered that the jools was missing, sez Oi, 'We must put the great detictive, Donovan, on the job, for if any one can foind out the thaafe he's the boy.'"

I bowed, and told him I felt flattered beyond expression of words at such a testimony coming from such a source. Whereupon Mr. O'Flaggerty's face expanded into a broad grin, as he said—

"Shure you're very welcome, and if yez foind the jools Oi'll be plazed to give yez a written testimonial that will get yez a situation any day if yez happen to be thrown out of employment."

"Really, sir," I exclaimed, "you are too magnanimous. But let us to business. You have lost jewellery to the value of £150. Was this jewellery that you've lost some that you had to dispose of?"

"Be jabers, did yez ever hear the loikes o' that? Indade I didn't want to dispose of them. It's my woife's jools that's been stolen."

"Your wife's?" I cried, in surprise.

"Yes. Yez see, she and me was up the night before last at Widder Hooligan's, in Clerkenwell, on the occasion of the waking of her dead husband. Bridget Hooligan is from me own country, and she always was a dacent body; and when Mike Hooligan died she rasolved to wake him in a superior kind of manner. So she sint out invatations to the gintry in the neighbourhood, inclooding meself, and sez Oi to my woife, sez Oi, 'Molly, you'll have to put on yez best silk toggery, and all yez jools, bekase Oi wouldn't loike me ould frind Mike Hooligan to think that we'd been disrespectful to his corrups.' And sez Molly, 'Do you think,' says she, 'the company will be select?' 'Select,' says Oi; 'do yez suppose the Widder Hooligan would invoite anybody that wasn't respictable.' So Molly put on an illigant black satin gown, and all the joollery that ever Oi guv her. And, Mr. Donovan, if yez had only seen her, yez mouth, sor, would have wathered, for she was

as foine a sight as iver yez set your two eyes on. Begorra, sor, yez couldn't have towld her from a mimber of the aristockracy."

Here he opened a door that led into a passage, and called out—

"Molly, darlint, come here, while Oi introduce yez to a great detictive."

In a few minutes Mrs. O'Flaggerty waddled in the room. She could not have weighed an ounce less than fourteen stone. What little hair she had was rusty red, while her complexion was yellow and brick-dust colour. She had small, bleared eyes, and a mouth that extended across the whole of the lower part of her face.

"Me woife," said O'Flaggerty, with touching pride, extending his hand towards her by way of introducing me to her.

"Good day to yez," she exclaimed, as she flopped into a chair, which creaked ominously beneath her weight.

I returned her greeting, and then asked her to give me particulars of her loss.

"Was Barney telling yez we were at Mike Hooligan's wake?" she asked, in a voice that reminded one of the sharpening of a saw.

"Yes, madam, he has already furnished me with that information."

"Well, it was as foine a wake as iver Oi've been at. But there was some people there that, for the loife av me, Oi couldn't understand why Bridget had axed to come. But nivertheless we'd great fun, and Bridget did the thing handsome, for poor Mike was greatly respicted, and av coorse we had to drink his health. Well, sor, if yez had seen——"

I here suggested that, perhaps, it was not necessary to go into all these details, for while they were no doubt

highly interesting, time was valuable, and it would be as well to come to the main point. But the lady declared that she was coming to it, if I had not interrupted her, so I let her proceed in her own way, and she continued—

"As Oi was saying, it was the foinest sight yez iver saw. The corrups looked illigant, for Bridget did the thing without regarding the expinse, and dressed him in his best clothes, and as we gazed on him, divil a dry eye was there in the place. So Bridget sez, sez she, 'Me friends, me heart's just being ripped out av me wid grief when Oi sees how yez are affected, and if you'll step into the other room, there's a small drap of whisky that Oi sent to Oireland for in honour of me poor dead husband.' So wid that we all went into the other room, and the fun began. Well, sor, if yez had seen the way every one prisint entered into the spirit of the thing, it would have done yez good. There was lashins of the foinest ould malt from Belfast, and every dilicacy av the season: so there was small cause for us not enjoying ourselves. While I was taking the floor with Pat Murphy, me diamond brooch fell off, and picking it up with the illigintest bow, he guv it to me. And sez Oi to me husband, sez Oi, 'Barney, yez had better put all these things in your pocket, for all the company has got a sight of them now, and may be Oi'll be losing them.' And wid that he tuk me brooch and me goold watch, and me earrings and me chain, and puts them upstairs in Bridget's bedroom. Well, sor, we kipt up the fun till four o'clock in the mornin', and then Barney says as we ought to be going; and as the whisky was taking a hould of him——"

"That's a loie for yez!" chimed in Barney.

"Devil a loie!" answered the lady emphatically.

"Shure it was yourself that couldn't stand, and I had to support yez."

"Och! the Lord forgive yez, Barney," exclaimed the lady, in horror, holding up her fat hands heavenwards and displaying on her enormous fingers several valuable rings. "Was there iver such a loie tould before in all the wurrold?"

"Oi tell——" began Barney, with rising warmth; but I promptly put a stop to the discussion by taking up my hat and threatening to depart if they did not come to the point. And so the lady, in a half-sobbing way, said—

"Well, sor, as Oi was going to say, Oi got Barney to his feet, and wint upstairs for me clothes and me jools, but divil a jool was there to be found. Av coorse I axed if anybody had seen me jools. Me friend Bridget Hooligan had been that overcome wid grief and the fun av the wake that the boys had put her to bed, and there was no more spache in her than there was in the corrups of her dead husband. In fact, the whole av the company, barrin' mesilf and Barney, was in much the same condition, and niver a word av satisfaction could we get. The next day, Barney wint round to the house, and Bridget swore that if she could find out who had taken the jools, she'd give 'em twenty years of pinal servingtood."

"Have you known Mrs. Bridget Hooligan long?" I asked.

"Indade Oi have. Me and her was childer together in Tipperary. She's the dacinest and honestest woman in London this blessed minute."

As I had no desire to prolong the interview with Mr. and Mrs. O'Flaggerty, I procured from them a full description of the missing jewellery, and then proceeded

to the house of Mrs. Hooligan. Her husband had been a pork butcher, and had carried on a very flourishing business, so that the lady was left in an exceedingly comfortable position; and being under forty, passably good-looking, and childless, I thought it highly probable she would soon console herself for the loss of No. 1 by wedding spouse No. 2. Her household consisted of herself, two servants, a number of birds, three or four cats, a dog, and a very pretty little monkey. She was clearly much distressed by the theft of her friend's jewels, and she furnished me with a complete list of every one who had been present on the eventful night. But when I asked her if her suspicions pointed to any particular person, she emphatically declared that they did not, for they were all "hoighly respictable people." As I felt much interested in this case—for the ludicrous element quite tickled my fancy—I gave it every attention, and made inquiries about all the "hoighly respictable people"; but I could learn nothing that would justify my suspecting any of them. Of course, I quite satisfied myself that the jewellery really had been lost, and that it was approximately worth the value placed upon it. It appears that Mr. O'Flaggerty had placed his wife's treasures on the dressing-table in Mrs. Hooligan's room, and after that they were seen no more.

For three weeks I endeavoured to get hold of some clue that would put me on the track of the thief, but utterly failed.

One afternoon I called at Mrs. Hooligan's house, as I wished to ask her a few questions bearing on the case. I was shown into the sitting-room, and was told that the lady of the house would come to me shortly.

It was a cold day, and a bright fire was burning. In a box before the fire, and comfortably ensconced on a bed of flannel, was the pet monkey. I tried to make friends with it, but it chattered and grinned at me, and showed its teeth so viciously that I abandoned the attempt. A new magazine was lying on the table, and, in order to pass the time, I took the book up, and opened my knife to cut the leaves, subsequently placing the knife on the table and becoming interested in an article. But presently my attention was drawn to the movements of the monkey. He had got out of the box, and was crawling along the floor, with an extraordinary look of cunning in his little face. I half closed my eyes and pretended to sleep, and soon the animal cautiously climbed up a leg of the table, stretched out its forepaw, clutched my knife, slid down, crept to his box again, and carefully hid the knife under the flannel bed.

"Eureka!" I fairly shouted. "I believe that monkey is the thief who stole the jewellery."

When Mrs. Hooligan entered the room, I mentioned my suspicions, but she waxed indignant, and vowed "the darlint pet" was as innocent as "a babe that hasn't yet breathed the blessed breath of life."

This declaration of the monkey's honesty, however, did not satisfy me, and I begged to be allowed to make a search in the bedroom where the jewellery had been placed. With some reluctance, the permission was accorded, and I ransacked the most likely places in the room without result. During this time Mrs. Hooligan looked on, hugging her pet to her bosom, and occasionally muttering, "Did 'em suspect the swate innocent of being a thafe?"

The bedstead was an old-fashioned four post, the top being covered with a canopy, and it suddenly occurred

to me to look on this canopy. So I placed a chair on a table, and climbed up, and there, on the canopy, lay the lost jewellery. As if conscious of the fact that his guilt had been found out, the monkey began to squeal, and Mrs. Hooligan, while still hugging him, poured out a string of vituperative adjectives on his devoted head. As such a culprit could not be dragged off to durance vile, nor sentenced to "pinal servingtood," there was nothing further to be done but to restore the jewellery to Mrs. O'Flaggerty, and when I did so, I verily believe she wanted to throw her fat arms round my neck and embrace me.

"Begorra!" she exclaimed, "Oi niver thought Oi should see the blessed jools again. You're a darlint! Long loife to yez!"

As for Mr. Barney O'Flaggerty, he was so overjoyed that he executed a jig, and wished to write out and present me with a testimonial; an honour, however, that I felt called upon to decline with thanks. I told him I was rewarded sufficiently in the satisfaction I felt at being able to restore to the excellent Mrs. O'Flaggerty her long lost "jools."

"OLD HURRICANE," THE GLASGOW FORGER.

The clever rascal who earned for himself the cognomen of "Old Hurricane" was, in a certain way, one of the most remarkable types of criminals the present century has produced. The story of his life reads like one of the vivid romances which sensational novel-writers are so fond of depicting, and it serves once more to give point to the oft-quoted adage that truth is often stranger than fiction.

"Old Hurricane's" real name was Daniel Duncan, and he was a member of a family of some standing. His grandfather had been in the service of the Hon. East India Company, and was in India for many years. His father was also in the Company's service, and became an officer on board an East Indiaman, and for many years traded between London and Calcutta. At an early age Daniel, the subject of this sketch, was taken out to India by his father, and was placed as a clerk in one of the offices of the Company in Calcutta. Here he remained for five years, during which time he displayed an extraordinary aptitude for commercial life, and had he been less restless and less disposed to rove, there is little doubt he might have risen to high position and distinction. He had, however, always expressed a desire to travel about the world, though his father and the rest of the family were opposed to his doing so. But when he reached the age of twenty

he asserted his independence, and, throwing up his appointment, he got a birth as supercargo on board a barque that was going down to Batavia. But he was ambitious of learning seamanship, and studying navigation, and after this first voyage he shipped as an ordinary seaman on board a Dutch East Indiaman, and for ten years he continued to rove about the world. The details of his career during that period have never been ascertained, but it is pretty well known that he led a singularly adventurous life, and fought in some of the engagements in which the Dutch were so frequently involved at that period. His knowledge of commercial matters and his skill as a penman seem to have served him in good stead, and his first recorded criminal act was when he was about thirty, and it serves to illustrate the daring of the man. By this time he had risen to be mate of a vessel, and had gone with her to Hong Kong. Here the captain was seized with a sudden and dangerous illness, and the temporary command devolved upon Duncan, and, taking advantage of his position, he forged certain bills on some of the merchants who were shipping cargo, and by this means raised a large sum of money. As soon as he got possession of the money he cleared out, and, as was subsequently ascertained, he got a passage in a junk going to Yokohama, in Japan, where he remained for some months, and, notwithstanding the hue and cry and a large reward that was offered for his capture, he was not taken, and in a little while he purchased a derelict schooner that had been in the American trade, but, falling in with a hurricane in the Sea of Japan, she had been all but wrecked, though she succeeded in reaching Yokohama, where she was sold as old timber to a Japanese merchant, who was about to break her

up. Duncan, however, made an offer for her, which was accepted; and his experienced eye convincing him that she was perfectly seaworthy, he had her thoroughly over-hauled, refitted, and equipped, and laying in a large stock of arms and ammunition, he got a scratch crew of loafers and blackguards together, and set sail with piratical intentions.

At the end of a little more than a year he turned up with his vessel, which he called the Sea Serpent, in the Gulf of Mexico, and there is evidence that his cruise must have been very successful, for he and his crew were laden with booty. He seems, too, to have exercised such authority over his men, and to have got them so well in hand, that he had them under perfect control. He picked up a few more daring adventurers in Mexico, and, having refitted, he once more set sail for some unknown destination. We next hear of him some months later, when he appeared in the Bay of Bengal, where he attacked and boarded a homeward-bound East Indiaman, and having made a fine haul, he cleared off, and there is a blank of four or five years in his history which has never been filled up. At last, he turned up in New York, where he got into a row one night in a sailors' den, and, having half killed a man, he was arrested and lodged in prison. But the authorities did not know the sort of man they had to deal with, otherwise they would probably have confined him in an iron-bound cell, and placed a triple guard over him. As it was, he wrenched away two iron stanchions from his window, climbed by means of a waterspout to the roof of a wing of the prison, then dropped down about thirty feet on to an outbuilding; thence he gained a yard, succeeded in getting over a

spiked wall, and got clear away, and was seen no more in New York.

For many succeeding years he continued to lead a wild and adventurous life. It is known that he visited nearly every part of the globe, and went through many exciting adventures. At last he returned to his native city, Glasgow. He was then upwards of fifty years of age, and looked much older. His face was gnarled and weather-beaten, until it looked like a piece of ancient oak. And, notwithstanding the hard life he had led, he was tough and wiry, and seemed capable of standing almost any amount of hardship.

It might be thought that, during his long career as pirate and rover, he would have laid by a nest-egg for his old age. But it is pretty certain that he had nothing to fall back upon. Within a few months of his return to the scenes of his youth he led to the altar a buxom widow, who had been thrice previously married, and each husband on his death had left her fairly well off. There is reason to believe that Duncan made such representations to her that she was under the impression she was marrying money. She was possessed of several thousand pounds herself, and with blind confidence and faith in her fourth husband, she let him have the handling of the money, with the result that he soon began to make ducks and drakes of it. As might be supposed, this led to great unpleasantness between him and his wife, and one night, when she bitterly reproached him for his conduct and heartlessness, he turned her out of doors. It was a bitter night in November, and the poor woman was so distracted that she committed suicide by throwing herself into the Clyde.

It was about this time that Duncan came to be known as "Old Hurricane," a name that stuck to him ever

afterwards. In spite of the way he had treated his wife—who, it was said, had a temper of her own—"Old Hurricane" was considered to be a respectable man, though an eccentric one.

He now started a business as a shipbroker, and a few months later he obtained a partner, who was a man of considerable position and means, and he invested two thousand pounds in the business. His name was Robert Gourlay, and he appears to have had the most perfect confidence in his partner.

"Old Hurricane" seems to have been able to exert great power over most people he came in contact with, and, of course, at this time no one knew anything of his past history, beyond what he himself chose to tell, and that was that he had formerly been in the East India Company's service, and had spent many years at sea. He was full of anecdote, exceedingly good company, could sing a rattling song, so that in spite of a certain irascibility of temper, and a somewhat inordinate love for whisky, his company was courted, and it was considered rather a privilege to be on good terms with "Old Hurricane."

The shipbroking business does not seem to have flourished, and Mr. Gourlay became greatly dissatisfied, as he feared he was going to lose his money. But there was no absolute rupture between the partners, and "Old Hurricane" continued to be a welcome guest at Gourlay's house.

One day Mr. Gourlay, in a very excited state, called at the Detective Department, and made a statement to the effect that his cheque-book had been stolen, and that a cheque for five hundred pounds had been presented at the bank and paid by his bankers.

I was called upon to make an investigation, and I found that the cheque had been made payable to "Arthur Hay," and Gourlay's signature had been so cleverly imitated that unless compared very critically with the genuine signature, it would have deceived any one. Gourlay declared that he knew no one by the name of Arthur Hay, and that he had never made a cheque payable to any such person. Of course the teller who paid the money was subjected to a keen interrogation, and he stated that at the time the cheque —which was an open one—was presented, they were exceedingly busy at the bank, for it was a market day, and within a quarter of an hour of closing time, and there were a great many customers waiting to be attended to. As the signature seemed genuine, and the cheque was properly endorsed, the money was paid, and the receiver of it requested that as much of it as possible should be paid in gold or silver. Nearly four hundred pounds was thus made up, and the rest was in one pound bank-notes.

The person who presented the cheque was described as a young man, about seven-and-twenty, respectably dressed, and of fair complexion. He carried a small black bag with him, and into this he put the money. Unfortunately the forgery was not discovered until four days later, so that the person, whoever he was, who had received the money had had ample time to get away from the city.

I first turned my attention to trying to discover how the cheque-book had been stolen. The day before the cheque was presented Mr. Gourlay had drawn two or three small cheques, and had put the book safely back in its usual receptacle in his desk, which stood in a small room he used as a sort of office in his house. That

night he had had a dinner party, and I got a list of every one present, but no one answered the description of the young man who had presented the cheque for payment. It was pretty certain, however, that the cheque-book was abstracted from the desk that night, but Gourlay would not undertake to point the finger of suspicion at any one of his guests, nor his servants, of whom he kept three. My investigations brought me in contact with "Old Hurricane," who had been present at the dinner party. It was my first acquaintance with him, and I thought him a very remarkable man; but, of course, at that time I never dreamed of suspecting him of any wrong-doing. He expressed deep sympathy with his partner, and apparently was much concerned about the loss.

Although I used every possible effort, I did not succeed in getting the slightest clue to the criminal, and the matter remained a mystery. In the meantime the bank people tried to repudiate all responsibility, but Gourlay brought an action against them and won his case; and though the bank appealed, the judgment was confirmed, and they had to refund the money, which, it was ruled, they had carelessly paid away.

A year elapsed, during which "Old Hurricane" and Gourlay dissolved partnership, and soon after Glasgow was startled by the announcement that a number of foreign bonds, representing large sums of money, had been placed upon the market, and had changed hands several times. Of course there was great consternation amongst the then holders of the bonds, which were submitted to experts and pronounced to be exceedingly clever forgeries. It became my duty to investigate the matter, and I found that the bonds had originally passed through the hands of a London broker who had got

them from a man who had described himself as a ship-broker and commission agent. He gave the name of William Gordon Mathers, and he stated that he had been empowered by some of his clients to negotiate the bonds. The broker disposed of the bonds at the then market value, and handed the money, less his commission, to Mathers, whose description tallied with that of "Old Hurricane." I then began to make inquiries about "Hurricane," and found he had left Glasgow six months before, and nobody seemed to know where he had gone to. I felt sure now that the man was a swindler, and on comparing notes with Mr. Gourlay I came to the conclusion that the man who had stolen the cheque-book and forged the cheque was none other than Duncan, and a comparison of the handwriting on the forged cheque and on one of the bonds proved that it was almost identical. But the forger was evidently master of several styles, for all the bonds were in different writing; but critical examination proved that there were certain peculiarities common to all of them. It was clear, however, that the forged cheque had been presented by some confederate, and I concentrated all my efforts now in trying to find out who this was, for "Old Hurricane" had disappeared and left no trace behind him. I ascertained that amongst his late wife's relations was a young man who seemed to answer the descriptive particulars of the presenter of the cheque. His name was Robert Scott, and for a time he had been a clerk in a solicitor's office in Glasgow, but had been discharged for misappropriating a small sum of money. His employers generously refrained from prosecuting, though they felt they could not keep him any longer in their service. For upwards of a year afterwards he seemed to have done nothing but sponge upon his rela-

tives, but at last suddenly took himself off, and it was believed that he got a situation in Liverpool. After some search, I found him in Liverpool fulfilling the position of clerk to a firm of auctioneers, and I succeeded in exacting from him a confession that he had cashed the cheque at Duncan's instigation, but that he did not know it was a forged cheque.

It was now clear that "Old Hurricane," as he was called, was a consummate scoundrel, and I was resolved to get hold of him if it were at all possible. I found that he had netted several thousand pounds by the forged bonds, and I succeeded in tracing him to Southampton, where he took passage for Jamaica in the West Indian Company's steamer La Plata. Having armed myself with a warrant for his arrest, I proceeded to Jamaica by the next steamer, and, on arrival at my destination, I was informed that "a gentleman," who was known as Percy Standish, and whose description in every detail answered that of "Old Hurricane," had arrived by the La Plata, and after staying some little time in Jamaica, during which he travelled about the island a good deal, and seemed to have a very long purse, left for Trinidad.

To Trinidad I followed him as fast as I could get, and I found that he was there, and was negotiating for the purchase of a coffee plantation, and had my arrival been delayed for a little time the transaction would have been completed. It was very evident that he had never dreamed of the probabilities of the representatives of the outraged law following him. And when it dawned upon him that in spite of all his cleverness he was tracked down, he seemed dumfoundered. But when the reaction from the shock set in he broke out into a furious passion, and fully justified his appellation

of "Old Hurricane." He tried hard and desperately to escape, and vowed that I should never get him to England alive. Of course this put me on my guard, and I took the most extraordinary precautions to keep him from committing suicide.

The responsibility of such a charge was excessively great, and my anxiety caused me many a sleepless night until I had safely conveyed my prisoner across the ocean, and delivered him into the hands of the authorities. He was duly committed for trial, and I was instructed to do all I could in the meantime to learn something of his history. The result was I succeeded in ascertaining the story of his life as I have given it. A good many of the particulars—which I subsequently verified—came from his own lips, for when he found there was no chance of escaping from the consequences of the forgeries, he made a boast of what he had done, and seemed to take a pride in recounting his villainies.

The stealing of his partner's cheque-book, the forging of a cheque, and the forgery of the bonds were clearly proved against him. In the case of the bonds he had displayed remarkable ingenuity and cleverness, and his power of penmanship and his commercial knowledge served him in good stead. As his crime was a very serious one he was sentenced to imprisonment for life, but his restless spirit could not brook the restraint, and he went out of his mind. For five years he was confined as a dangerous lunatic, and one day died suddenly during a paroxysm of fury, the result of being temporarily deprived of his pipe as a punishment for some refractory conduct. He was a great smoker, and it was generally found to be an effective way of punishing him to deprive him of his pipe. On this

occasion, however, he flew into a violent passion, and it was necessary to confine him in a strait jacket. He then became so violent that he burst a blood-vessel in the brain, and died in a few minutes. Thus ended the career of a truly remarkable man, who, had he turned his undoubted talents into a proper channel, might certainly have risen to eminence. But he chose the wrong course, and his name lives only in the annals of crime.

A GLASGOW CRIME.

Before the Saltmarket underwent the alterations and changes that have made it what it is to-day, there used to stand on the right-hand side from the Trongate a little shop kept by a woman named Kate Williams, but who was locally known as "Mad Kitty," not that she was really mad, but she was somewhat eccentric in her habits, and lived a lonely and isolated life. She was an object of petty persecution on the part of the street arabs, who seemed to take a special delight in teasing her, and she resented this by sometimes endeavouring to drench them with water which would not have been vouched for as pure by even a tyro in sanitary matters, and at other times she would pursue them with a stick, and threaten them with the direst consequences if she caught them; but as the arabs were fleet of foot, and Kitty was cumbersome and advanced in years, she had little chance against her tormentors, and consequently she never did catch them, so that the threats went unfulfilled.

Her business was ostensibly that of a buyer and seller of old clothes, but she was a dabbler in almost anything by which she could turn an honest penny. For she was accounted to be very honest and straightforward in her dealings, and no one ever spoke a word against her probity. But though she seemed wretchedly poor, it was generally supposed throughout the neighbourhood that she had the miser's instinct and habits, and that

somewhere or other she kept a pretty long stocking stowed away.

The premises that Kitty occupied were on a level with the street, and consisted of the shop and two or three rooms at the back, including a kitchen and scullery. The house was old and dilapidated, and was the property of a man named Hugh Neil, who lived in the Candleriggs. He was not a favourite amongst his neighbours, for he was cantankerous and quarrelsome, and somewhat given to drink. He owned a good deal of small property one way and another; but he, like Mad Kitty, was thought to be somewhat inclined to hoarding. He was a widower, with a family of grown-up sons and daughters. But they were scattered over the world; though one son, James, was employed in a Glasgow shipping office, and he was the only member of the family who was known to visit the old man. Neil himself followed no occupation, but it was rumoured that he was very speculative, and much given to dabbling in stocks and shares on a small scale; but not, as it would have appeared, with any conspicuous success. This seemed to some extent to prey upon his mind, and he was generally gloomy and melancholy. From remarks that he himself occasionally made, it was thought that he had a great craving for riches, and it was said that he would do anything for money.

It was currently rumoured, too, that between himself and Mad Kitty there had been some courting, and that he had offered to marry her. That there was truth in this rumour was probable, because it was well-known that at one time he had spent the greater part of his days in Kitty's shop, and it was quite supposed then that they would make a match of it. But for reasons best known to themselves, his visits ceased, save

when he went to collect his rent, which he did with unswerving regularity the moment it was due, and he was reported to be a most exacting and hard-fisted landlord.

It will of course be gathered from what I have said that what was known of Neil and Kitty was to a very large extent mere inference, because they themselves were peculiarly reticent about their affairs. Kitty had few acquaintances. She was fond sometimes of a chat with any one who liked to drop into her shop and spend half an hour or so; but on such occasions she would talk about everything but herself, and though certain of her neighbours had occasionally endeavoured to draw her out, they had quite failed.

Touching Kitty's personal appearance, she was somewhat remarkable. She was of medium height, rather stout, with small blue eyes that had a somewhat wild expression. But the most striking feature was her hair, which was a bright yellow—the colour of new straw. She had a great quantity of it, too, and as she neglected it very much, and allowed it to hang about her shoulders in a ragged condition, it added to her wild appearance. In her youth there could be no doubt that she had been rather a fine and attractive looking woman, but she was far from being that now, and if it was true that old Neil had paid attention to her with a view to marriage, he must have had rather peculiar taste. However, there is no accounting for tastes, and what is objectionable to one person is often very fascinating to another.

And now we come to the mystery. On the first blush it does not seem likely that an old woman, a seller and buyer of left-off clothing, and living in a squalid hovel in a squalid region, would become the

central figure in a strange and romantic drama. It was the day after November "term," or rent-day, that Kitty's shop not being opened as usual some suspicions were aroused that all was not well, especially as some of the neighbours failed to get any response to frequent knockings at the door; for misanthropical and unsociable as the old woman was, those round about still manifested some interest in her. As the suspicions increased towards night the policeman on the beat was communicated with, and finally a doctor in the neighbourhood was spoken to, because it was known that Kitty had been in the habit of getting medicine from him. He expressed an opinion that she was probably dead, inasmuch as he knew she was suffering from a weak heart, and he had recently been treating her for asthma.

Under these circumstances, it was decided to enter the place, and on trying the door it was found to be unlocked, and was easily opened from the outside. This was regarded in itself as a suspicious circumstance, and the suspicions were justified when, a few moments later, Kitty was observed in a doubled-up position on the floor of her kitchen, and it needed but a glance to determine that she was dead.

So far it might have been supposed that she had died, as the doctor had been inclined to think she had died, namely, from the sudden failure of a weak heart. But there was glaring evidence that she had met her death by violence, and in a very cruel manner. A towel had been twisted round her throat, and by this means she had been strangled, for her face wore the horrible expression peculiar to people who die from strangulation. It was a case of murder. That seemed clear from the first, for it was proved to be impossible that the poor creature could have strangled herself.

I was at once instructed to go into the case, and lost no time in proceeding to Kitty's house. As was my invarible practice in such matters, I made the fullest possible inquiries amongst the neighbours as to the woman's habits, her acquaintances, &c. And after this my first impression was, and it was a very natural one, that the opinion about her having a hoard of money had been a correct one, and some evil person having become acquainted with this had got into her place and taken her life for the sake of obtaining her money.

From the appearance of the room it seemed highly probable that there had been a struggle, and the poor old creature had fought for her life, but nobody could be found who had heard any noise or anything like a scream. I made a most careful examination of the premises, but without discovering anything that was likely to be of use in helping me to track down the murderer, except perhaps one thing—namely, a large red and yellow cotton pocket-handkerchief which I found lying on the floor of the room. Of course, such a handkerchief might have belonged to the woman herself, but there were certain points against that likelihood. There was not another handkerchief like it in the house, and this particular one bore unmistakable evidence that its owner and user was a snuff-taker, but I could find nothing which would have led me to suppose that Kitty took snuff. In fact, the doctor pronounced unhesitatingly that she had never snuffed. Therefore the handkerchief was not without considerable importance to me as a probable clue. It was a common enough article, and such as is generally used by poor people who indulge in the habit of snuff-taking. There was no name on it, and it was of a very ordinary pattern and make. Nevertheless, I believed that it might

ultimately prove of great service in connection with the case. On making an examination of the murdered woman's effects, I found in the drawer of an old desk a bank-book showing that she had on deposit, in one of the Glasgow banks, a sum amounting to nearly six hundred pounds.

This seemed at once to sweep away the theory that she had been in the habit of hoarding her money in the house, and though that theory had likely enough led to her being murdered, the murderer had been disappointed, and had failed to get anything for his ghastly work. Another discovery that I made was a will. It had been written by the woman herself some years before her death, and as it was somewhat a curiosity in the way of wills, I will give a copy of it, It was written very legibly on a sheet of foolscap paper, and read as follows:—

"My name is Kate Williams, but I was born Fletcher. I was born in Sunderland, and came to Glasgow when I was fourteen. Soon after I was twenty I married a chap named Williams; he worked about the docks, and was a drunken scamp. He didn't treat me well, and I wouldn't live with him. I had a girl by him, and me and her went to my native place, Sunderland, and lived there for five years. But my folk didn't treat me well, and hearing as my man had been killed by an accident, at which I was very glad, I went back to Glasgow and had a pretty hard time of it. But I was fond of my girl, and worked for her night and day. Some children, though, seem to have the devil in them, and when Kitty was seventeen years old she ran off with a fellow they called Jack Niven. I knew he was a blackguard, and I didn't want her to have him; but it was no use my talking, and she had her way. A year after that she

wrote to me from Manchester and asked me to send her some money for the sake of her baby, but I told her that as she had made her bed so she must lie on it. I've never heard anything of her since then; and as I was perhaps a bit hard with her, I want all my money and whatever I've got when I'm dead to go to her. She is to get everything I have. And if she's dead, it must go to her child. I've always been a saving kind of woman, and I daresay she'll get a fairish sum."

Here followed the signatures of two persons, and strangely-worded as the will was, it was a legal document, and I handed it to a reputable solicitor, who at once set to work to discover the daughter or granddaughter.

In the meantime I directed my energies to endeavouring to pick up a trace of the murderer, but though I made the most exhaustive inquiries, I could not get hold of anything that would have justified me in suspecting any particular individual in the neighbourhood. The neighbours were of the usual class found in such a locality, and there were many disreputable characters amongst them, but still, nothing cropped up that was of any value to me in my search. So there was nothing for it but to watch and wait.

It was about four weeks after the commission of the crime that I learnt that Hugh Neil, Kitty's landlord, had paid her some attention, and it was thought that he had been desirous of marrying her. And when this information was given to me, I asked myself the question whether it was likely that this man was the person who had killed Kitty. The murder had been perpetrated the day after rent-day. That was rather curious, and suggested the idea that it was thought by the murderer that the woman might be in possession of money

which would be easily got at. But then, on the other hand, why was the crime committed after the rent-day? for whatever store she had, the paying of the rent would lessen it; and it might have been thought that the criminal would have done his work the day before, rather than the day after the term.

However, it set me pondering, and I began to go upon a somewhat different tack, with the result that ascertained that on the day that the rent was due Hugh Neil went to his tenants as usual, and in the course of the afternoon a woman living in the district went to Kitty's shop to sell some rubbish. She knew Kitty well, and also Neil, and when she entered the shop she observed them both sitting in the little back room, and there were tea things on the table, which suggested that they had been taking tea together.

The woman having transacted her business went away, but having failed to get the money she wanted, she hunted up some more old things, and returned in the evening to Mrs. Williams's shop. That was between three and four hours after her first visit, and she observed that Neil was still there, and she commented on this to some of her neighbours.

From these incidents I was led to make inquiries about Neil, for was it not likely that he knew more of her affairs than any one else? I found out that he was a grasping, avaricious man, and bore the character of being very miserly. A suspicious incident, too, was that he had gone away from his home a few days after the crime, and had not returned, and nobody seemed to know where he had gone to. I therefore waited on his son, and learnt that his father, who had been very unwell, was on a visit to a brother, who was a small farmer in Ayrshire. I showed the son the handkerchief,

and asked him if he could identify it as having belonged to his father, but he either could not or would not do so.

Although I had not obtained any information that would have warranted me in arresting Neil, I went down to where he was staying in Ayrshire. I found it was true that he was with a brother, a man older than himself, who eked out a miserable existence by farming a very small and unproductive estate of a few acres.

Two days after my arrival in the neighbouring village, where it was my intention to remain for a little while and keep a close watch on Hugh Neil's movements, a rumour spread that he had been found dead in a ditch, and this was soon corroborated. He had been discovered in one of his brother's fields lying face downwards in a shallow ditch, where there was only about half a foot of water. His body was not in the water at all, only his face, and it seemed at first as if he had deliberately taken his life by lying down on the bank and holding his face in the water until he was suffocated. But a *post-mortem* examination of the body negatived this idea, for he had not died from suffocation at all; nor was it made quite clear what the cause of death was, for although the heart was a little fatty, that was not sufficient to account for death, and all the other organs were fairly healthy. At any rate, there was nothing in their appearance suggestive of sudden death. He might have had a fit, but there was no clear evidence of that. Nor was there any reason why he should have been in the spot where he was found. There was no pathway, and the field was planted with winter cabbages. Nobody had seen him in the field, and why he went there could not be ascertained.

It was proved beyond doubt that he had been in the habit of taking snuff for many years; but though I

searched his effects I could not find a fellow handkerchief to the one in my possession, and nothing that corroborated the suspicion I entertained against him. The murderer has never been discovered, and if Hugh Neil did not kill the old woman, who did? My own theory is that when he went for her rent he may have seen something that aroused his cupidity; or he may have urged his suit on Kitty, and, being refused, had determined to kill her. Stung by remorse, he had gone down to his brother's place, and though the doctor said there was no evidence of the man having died from suffocation, the result of drowning, I am clearly of opinion, in spite of this, that Hugh Neil did kill himself by holding his face in the water. At any rate, the whole affair is shrouded in mystery, and will remain a mystery until the end of time.

It is satisfactory to be able to state that, though it was found that Kitty's daughter was no longer in the land of the living, her own child was and is in the care of some honest people who had taken a fancy to her. She therefore succeeded to her grandmother's money, and a philanthropic lady interested herself in her, and undertook to see that she was well looked after in the future.

OUT OF HIS OWN MOUTH.

Any one who has ever had anything to do with criminals knows that it is necessary at times to resort to somewhat strange expedients in order to bring them to book. The criminal is nothing if he is not cunning, and this cunning has to be counteracted in order that he may be circumvented. Years ago I had to do with the case of a man who, I think, was a past master in the art of deception. Conscience with him appeared to be an utterly unknown quality. He had been in rather a flourishing way of business as a baker in Leith, near Edinburgh, but having a weakness for horse-racing, he got into difficulties, and became bankrupt. His estate was found to be worthless, for his furniture did not belong to him, but it was thought at the time that he was concealing some valuable property, and every means were taken to try and prove this, but without result. His name was Peter M'Gluckie, but in due course, when he got his discharge, he removed to Edinburgh, and changed his name to James Forsyth. For three or four years he seems to have got his living as a "turf and commission agent," but, from all accounts, it must have been a very meagre sort of living, for he did not wax fat, neither were his coffers filled, and at last he disappeared from Edinburgh altogether, but not before he had been prosecuted for fraudulently detaining money that had been entrusted to him for investment. Luck favoured him, however,

in this manner, as it had done in the bankruptcy case, for, although clearly guilty, he managed to escape punishment on some technical grounds.

Seven years later, while I was in London, I was called upon to investigate a case of robbery from the premises of Mr. Philip Simpson, a baker in a very large way of business. Mr. Simpson had several shops in London, but his head place was in Islington. He employed a large number of people, and at the Islington place he had a foreman known as Walter Wallace, who, though not particularly steady, was considered to be a very efficient workman, while his honesty had never once been suspected. For a long time Mr. Simpson had missed money in sums varying from two or three shillings to as many pounds, and first one and then another of his assistants were discharged, for, though nothing was legally proved against them, they were suspected. At length, the pilfering ceased for a time, and it was hoped that the dishonest servants had all been weeded out.

The shop in Islington, where a considerable trade was done in confectionery and afternoon tea, was under the entire control of a young woman named Emma Martin, who had been in the employ for two years, and was very highly respected by her master. She was about eight-and-twenty, and had formerly been in charge of a West End confectioner's, and only left on account of the death of the proprietor. She slept in the house, and she had under her as assistants three young women who went home at night after the shop was closed. Walter Wallace, who was foreman of the bakers, and had nothing whatever to do with the shop, except to keep it supplied with confectionery, had a staff of eight men under him, four of whom slept on the

premises with himself. But these men occupied a sort of outbuilding at the back of the main shop, and over the bakery.

Mr. Simpson lived at his Islington establishment with his wife, and he had three sons and two daughters, who looked after the other branch establishments. Mr. Simpson, who had not been in good health for some time, had gone away to the seaside with his wife, leaving the Islington shop in charge of Miss Emma Martin, in whom he reposed the greatest confidence. One night, during his absence, the house was broken into, and a sum of nearly two hundred pounds stolen, as well as a valuable clock, a couple of watches, some silver spoons, and a quantity of wearing apparel, including a very costly sealskin jacket belonging to Mrs. Simpson. The proprietor was telegraphed for immediately, and as soon as he returned, he sent for me and asked me to investigate the affair. I should explain that at the side of the house, which was a large one, was a covered passage to which entrance was gained by a doorway, the door of which was always locked at night. The passage led to the back part of the premises where the men's quarters were situated. Each man was provided with a key of the passage door, so that he could gain admission at night to his quarters, which were quite shut off from the house. But when the shop was closed, the only entrance to the house was by a side-door in this passage.

I found that the lock of the passage door had been picked, and the house door forced open with a jemmy. Then the thieves had made their way to Miss Martin's room, and carried off the cash-box in which she kept the money, and after that, other parts of the house had been visited.

I gathered that the day before it had been Miss Martin's birthday, and after the shop had closed at eight o'clock she had had a little gathering, including the other *employés*, and her sweetheart, a young man named Henry Butler, who was employed as a clerk in the city. A considerable quantity of ale had been consumed, and two bottles of champagne. And Miss Martin confessed that though she had not tasted a drop of anything else, she took two glasses of champagne, which got into her head, and when she went to bed she was dazed and stupid. I saw nothing that led me to suppose any of the servants had had anything to do with the burglary; but Walter Wallace came to me and volunteered a statement. He said that his own belief was Miss Martin and her sweetheart, Henry Butler, knew all about it. I asked him what his grounds of suspicions were, and he answered that he had overheard a conversation between Martin and Butler, in which she had said to him—

"It must be done to-night, or not at all."

Butler had also asked her if she could not let him have a key of the passage door, and she had told him that he must pick the lock so as not to arouse suspicion.

On the strength of this statement, I made some inquiries about Butler, and found that he had for a long time borne an unblemished character. But when a youth, he had been charged with taking some money out of the till of a shop where he was employed. And though brought before a magistrate, he was not sent to prison, as his employer interceded for him, and so he was let off with an admonition.

As Wallace adhered persistently to his statement, I held a consultation with Mr. Simpson, and it was

decided that his wife in my presence should search Miss Martin's boxes unknown to her. This was done, with the result that we found one of the missing watches, and some of the spoons wrapped up in a towel at the bottom of the box. Mrs. Simpson was aghast at the discovery, for she had had such faith in Emma. But her surprise was nothing as compared to Emma Martin's amazement, when I told her that I should arrest her on suspicion of being concerned in the robbery. I thought she would have gone mad with excitement, and when she heard that some of the stolen property had been found in her box, she declared solemnly that it must have been placed there by some one who had a spite against her.

I confessed that I was greatly impressed by her manner, which did not strike me as being that of a guilty person. At any rate, if she was guilty, she knew how to act a part with consummate skill. However, in face of the fact that some of the stolen goods had been found in her box, there was no alternative but to arrest her. She fell into a fit of hysterics, and, owing to her screams, we had great difficulty in conveying her to the station. The same afternoon I arrested Butler, and he was as emphatic in his protestations of innocence as his sweetheart had been, and, though not so demonstrative, he was not less distressed.

I found that all Miss Martin's people were very respectable indeed, and were fearfully shocked when they heard that Emma had been arrested on a charge of robbery. In appearance she was a very ladylike young woman, and there was nothing in her expression or manner that was suggestive of criminal propensities. Of course, appearances are not always to be trusted, but

a man whose business is the detection of crime must necessarily become expert in reading the indications of the human face, and I have never yet had to deal with a really guilty person who did not, in some measure more or less pronounced, betray by his or her expression a consciousness of guilt.

At the preliminary examination before the magistrate the two prisoners seemed overwhelmed with a sense of their position. They were remanded for a week, but admitted to bail, which was forthcoming in each case, and in the interim it became my duty to endeavour to get such evidence as would justify their conviction if they were really guilty. I thought I could not do better than have an interview with Emma Martin herself, and so I called upon her at her mother's house, where she was staying. I found her absolutely prostrate, and she asserted her innocence in the most solemn manner, expressing a hope that God would take her life if she was not speaking the truth. Of course I had heard all this sort of thing before. Even culprits about to die for murder had solemnly declared their innocence until within a few minutes of their dread doom being carried out. But somehow Emma Martin gave me the impression that she was not concealing any guilty knowledge. Nevertheless, I said to her—

"But you know, Miss Martin, if your assertions are correct, it would point to a dastardly plot against you to ruin your reputation and blast your future."

"Oh, it is—it is!" she moaned, wringing her hands in an agony of distress.

"Do you know of any one who would be likely to proceed to such a length?"

"There is one person who I think would do anything against me."

"Who is that?"

"It's Mr. Simpson's foreman."

"What, do you mean Walter Wallace?"

"Yes."

"But why should he be so bitter against you?"

"Because at one time he persecuted me with his addresses, although he is old enough to be my father. But I never could bear him, and repulsed him."

"But surely he would not be such a dastardly wretch as to try and fix such a crime as this upon you."

"He is dastardly enough for anything," she cried; "and he has more than once sworn that he would make me suffer some day. About a month ago he got drunk and spoilt a batch of bread, and I complained about him. That evening, after the shop was closed, he came to me and said he would make me smart for it though he should be hanged."

"Did you bring his threats under your master's notice?"

"No."

"Why did you not do so?"

"Because I did not attach any great importance to them. Besides, I did not wish him to lose his situation."

"Then do you believe that he committed this robbery?"

"I don't know, I don't know. He is bad enough."

"But how came the things in your box?"

"What was there to hinder him putting them in? He entered my room in order to get the cash-box, and as I have never kept my boxes locked, he would have no difficulty in carrying out his diabolical design."

"Well, Miss Martin, this is a very serious statement," I remarked, "and argues terrible wickedness on Wallace's part."

"I tell you he is wicked enough for anything," she cried; "but whether he committed the robbery or not, I did not do it."

On the strength of what she had said, I thought it was my place to make some inquiries about Wallace. His face had struck me as being familiar in some way, for I have always had a most remarkable memory for faces, and yet I could not recall where I had seen him, if ever I had seen him before.

From inquiries pushed amongst the servants, I found that it was quite true about Walter Wallace having wanted to pay his addresses to Miss Martin, notwithstanding that he was turned fifty years of age, although he looked younger than his years. He had also been heard to utter threats against her. So far, then, she was corroborated in her statement; but, of course, that did not warrant the assumption that he had been guilty of such a heinous double offence as robbing his master and then accusing an innocent woman.

I found that Wallace had come to Mr. Simpson from Liverpool, bringing with him a first-rate character from a well-known Liverpool baker, named Haslam, whom I decided to go and see in order to learn how Wallace had conducted himself in his employ. But my amazement may be imagined when I was informed by Mr. Haslam that he had never employed a person by the name of Walter Wallace, and had never given such a person a character. Here was a revelation, then; and it proved that Wallace had obtained his situation with Mr. Simpson by means of a forged character. I therefore devoted myself to tracing the fellow's career. It

was not an easy matter, but I succeeded, and without going into details I may briefly state that I proved him to be no other than Peter M'Gluckie, who had been in business in Leith, gone through the Bankruptcy Court, and had reappeared on the scene as "James Forsyth," turf and commission agent, whom I had arrested in Edinburgh years ago on a charge of fraud. But, as I have already stated at the beginning of this sketch, he escaped punishment then owing to some technical flaws in the indictment. In view of his black record, I felt that it was more than possible that Miss Martin's suspicions were well founded, but the thing was to get legal evidence against him, but this at last I was enabled to do in a strange way.

In Mr. Simpson's employ was a youth who was serving his time as an apprentice, and in a conversation I had with him he incidentally mentioned that he had heard Wallace exclaim in his sleep—

"Ah! I've done it. I told you I would ruin you some day."

I asked the boy if Wallace talked very much in his sleep, and he replied that he did. Now, I have heard it said that a person who is given to talking much in his sleep will answer questions if spoken to very softly and I resolved to put this to the test.

Wallace and the other men slept in a long room, and I ascertained that Wallace was a very sound sleeper, as most sleep-talkers are. So I obtained Mr. Simpson's permission to enter this place one night after the men had been in bed for some time. They were all asleep when I entered, and, what was more, all sleeping very soundly, for they had to be up at four in order to set the batch of bread. Taking a seat beside Wallace's bed I waited for what might happen. I had been there

about an hour, when he began to mumble some incoherent sentences. Putting my lips close to his ear, I whispered—

"Did you revenge yourself on Emma Martin?"

"Yes, yes," he repeated twice.

"How did you do it?"

"I put the robbery on her."

"Who committed the robbery?"

"I did."

"Did you do it alone?"

"Yes."

"What did you do with the money and the other things?"

"They are up in the roof over this place."

"Do you think you are likely to be found out?"

"No, there is no fear."

"Why not?"

"Because the watch was found in Emma Martin's box."

"Do you think that is sufficient to convict her?"

"Yes, of course it is."

"Had Henry Butler anything to do with the robbery?"

"No."

"Why then did you arouse suspicions against him?"

"In order to spite Emma."

"How did you commit the robbery?"

"I picked the lock of the outer door of the passage, and then broke open the inner door with a crowbar."

"You knew there was a large sum of money in the house that night?"

"Yes."

"How did you know that?"

"Because it was the day on which a lot of monthly accounts fell due."

I did not consider it necessary to push the questioning further, as I had got all the information I desired, and the rascal had convicted himself out of his own mouth. I therefore cautiously left the room, and later on, when the men had all gone to their work, Mr. Simpson and I went back to the room, in the ceiling of which was a trap-door that communicated with the roof in case of fire. By means of a step-ladder Simpson and I got through the doorway between the slates and the ceiling, and in one corner, just under the eaves, we found the money intact, with the exception of about twenty pounds, which, we subsequently ascertained, had been sent away by Wallace to a commission agent to back some race-horses.

All the other articles, with the exception of the seal-skin jacket, were discovered also in the loft. I immediately proceeded to arrest Walter Wallace as he was at work in the bakery. He was thunderstruck, and of course denied his guilt. I did not tell him how the information had been obtained, and I can well understand how great his astonishment must have been. He was brought up and remanded for further evidence, and during the remand the missing jacket was traced to a pawnbroker's at the East End, where it had been pawned for ten pounds, which was not one-fourth of its value. The pawner was a woman whom we were able to discover, and she proved that she had received the jacket from Wallace, with whom she had been intimate, and he had told her he had found it in a railway carriage.

Of course Miss Martin and Butler were instantly released, and so great was the public sympathy that

was displayed for them, that a very handsome testimonial was raised, and the young people were enabled to get married very comfortably and set up business on their own account, and, as I trust, live happily ever after.

Of Peter M'Gluckie, *alias* Forsyth, *alias* Wallace, it is only necessary to say that he was duly sent for trial, and, having regard to his bad record, he was sent away for seven years.

A STRANGE CONSPIRACY.

One afternoon a respectable-looking young woman, about seven or eight and twenty, well dressed, and of exceedingly pleasant manners, went into the shop of the well-known drapers and ladies' outfitters, Pearson & Hedderwick, of Edinburgh, and asked to look at certain articles she required. Having been supplied with what she wanted, she paid the bill, requested that the parcel might be sent home at once, and gave the assistant her card, on which was engraved—"Mrs. Lena Methven, 29, St. George's Square." Of course the goods were sent in due course, and there the transaction ended, or seemed to end; but, as a matter of fact, it was only the commencement so far as the lady with the pretty name was concerned. Two days later she returned with some of the things, and requested that they might be changed, as she was not quite satisfied with them. Her request was readily complied with, as the articles had not got injured in any way. She also made some small additional purchases, amounting to a couple of pounds or so, and when she took out her purse to pay this she found she had only a few shillings in cash; whereupon she appeared somewhat distressed, but said prettily, when the assistant told her she could pay for the goods when they were delivered at the house—

"Oh, well, perhaps you can kindly cash me this cheque and take the amount due out of it."

The cheque was a crossed one, and was payable to Mrs. Lena Methven, and was signed Charles Methven, the lady's husband, according to her own account. The amount was £30, the cheque being drawn on a Glasgow bank.

The assistant took the cheque to the manager, who after some little consideration decided to cash it; and after deducting the cost of the lady's purchases, the balance, about £28, was handed to her.

It was then after four o'clock, consequently too late for the cheque to be paid in and passed through the clearing house. So it was placed in the firm's safe until the morrow. The goods were sent home, and all seemed right, though in truth all was wrong, for two days after the cheque was returned from the Glasgow bank marked "Drawer not known." This was like the explosion of a bombshell to Messrs. Pearson & Hedderwick, and they immediately sent round to the lady's address, to learn, however, that she had departed two days before—that is, on the very day she cashed the cheque. She had only occupied apartments in the house for about a fortnight, and was thought to be highly respectable.

The firm now saw that they had been cleverly and unmistakably swindled by a pretty and clever adventuress, and no doubt her object in taking back the articles she had purchased was that the assistant might remember her again as a customer who had already spent a few pounds in the shop. It is difficult to understand how tradesmen can allow themselves to be so readily swindled in this way, but the explanation, no doubt, is the eager desire in these days of keen competition to secure custom. As soon as the fraud was known, I was communicated with, and got a full

description of the charming lady. Inquiries at the apartments where she had stayed elicited the statement that she had represented herself as the wife of a commercial traveller. She had a girl with her about twelve years old, whom she represented as an adopted daughter, and the mother and daughter were supposed to be on a visit to the Scottish metropolis. These interesting people had left nothing whatever behind them that was of the slightest value as affording a clue to their whereabouts; and as it was the height of the season, and a very busy time, when strangers were arriving and departing daily in large numbers, there was not much chance of tracing the pretty Mrs. Methven and her daughter beyond the North British Railway Station, whither they drove in a cab from St. George's Square; but where they booked to it was impossible to find out.

A week later word was sent from the detective department in Glasgow that a woman had cashed a forged cheque at a well-known jeweller's, and had decamped. She had a young girl with her, and was supposed to have gone to Edinburgh. The description that was given of the woman and child exactly tallied with that of Mrs. Methven and her adopted daughter, although in the Glasgow case she had become known as Helen Thomson, while the daughter had become her niece. When I heard the report, I was somewhat sceptical about the lady having come back to Edinburgh, unless she was infinitely more stupid than I believed her to be. But the evidence so far was that she was pretty keen-witted, and knew her way about town. Nevertheless, everything was done to try and discover her, but without avail, and I was then convinced she had not returned to Edinburgh.

A month later a report was sent down from London that a man, whose real name was supposed to be Alfred Cazenove, but who had a long string of aliases, was wanted for a series of frauds. He was supposed to be travelling in Scotland, and would no doubt attempt to swindle some people there. He had been seen in company with a ladylike young woman and a girl of about twelve. The description of the "ladylike young woman" and the girl answered that of the woman and child whom we were so anxious to meet; so that it was pretty evident that Mrs. Methven, or whatever her name was, did not work single-handed. Accompanying the report was a photograph of the man, which the London police had managed to get hold of. It represented quite a nice-looking fellow, verging on to middle life. In spite of this, we could get no trace of the man, until about a fortnight later, when I received a note from the manager of one of the leading hotels asking me to call upon him. On doing so, I learned that a "Rev. John Watson," with his wife and child, a girl about twelve, had stayed in the house eight or nine days, and on leaving had discharged his bill with a cheque drawn on a London bank for nearly three times the amount of the bill. As he was believed to be really a clergyman the cheque was cashed, the balance—after deducting the amount—was handed to him, and the rev. gentleman and his family took their departure. Of course it was the old game repeated. The cheque was returned marked "No effects." The description of the man, in spite of his assumption of the parson, identified him as Alfred Cazenove, but the woman supposed to be his wife was not the one who had swindled Pearson & Hedderwick, as she was fair and tall, and the other one as short and dark. Now, a

woman might alter her complexion to some extent, and also the colour of her hair, but she could not make herself short or tall at will. The little girl, however, was the same who had been represented as Mrs. Lena Methven's adopted daughter.

It was clear now that we had to deal with a gang of accomplished rogues, who would have to be hunted down. A reference to the clergy list showed that there was more than one "Rev. John Watson," but we soon established the fact that none of these gentlemen was the one wanted, and of course they were all highly indignant that the same name should have been taken by the swindler. In one of the drawers of the room that had been occupied by the "Rev. John Watson" and his family was found a cheque-book containing three cheques of the London bank on which the rascal had drawn the cheque which the manager of the hotel had cashed, and also a letter. He had overlooked these things in spite of his sharpness and cleverness, and it was further corroborative evidence of my oft-repeated assertion that, however clever a rogue may be, he betrays himself sooner or later by an act of stupidity. The letter was enclosed in an envelope that bore the London postmark, and was addressed to the Rev. John Watson. It was only a few lines, and ran thus:—

"You are doing well, but be careful. The detecs. are on the watch. We can circumvent them, however, if we are cautious. The funds are in an exceedingly flourishing state at present, and by and by we can live in clover. Don't let Nell do anything rash, and above all keep no letters, burn everything. You had better be in Brum. at the end of the month. There are good diggings there, and you should do well. But again let

me caution you to have no documentary evidence in case of being nabbed. And above all, be jannock.

"Yours as ever,

"THE BOSS."

This letter proved that the rascals knew they were being watched, but in spite of the repeated caution, the "Rev. John Watson" had not been as careful as his colleague in roguery desired him to be. The letter told him that he had better be in "Brum." at the end of the month. I took Brum. to mean Birmingham, often spoken of contemptuously as Brummagem. To the end of the month it wanted about twelve days, and I resolved to go to Birmingham on the chance of what might turn up.

Two or three days later an extensive burglary took place at the house of Mr. John Jamieson, the managing director of the Glasgow Manufacturing Company. Mr. Jamieson was a wealthy man, and resided at the West End of Glasgow. He and all his family had gone to a ball, leaving four servants in the house, including the cook and a man-servant. The house was entered about midnight, and a large quantity of silver plate was carried off, also some jewellery and wearing apparel, together with over £60 in cash, the total value of the property stolen being upwards of £2,000. The burglars succeeded in making good their escape, and carrying off all the stolen goods. I went over to Glasgow to investigate the affair, and on making a careful examination of the premises, I found that the thieves had effected an entrance by means of a back window at the end of a passage. In order to reach this window they had mounted the roof of a scullery, which was immediately

underneath. The bedroom of the man-servant led out of this passage, the door being close to the window, and therefore it seemed strange that he had not been disturbed in any way. On the face of it there did not seem to be much in the incident, but it aroused my suspicions, and I thought it might be worth while making some quiet inquiries about the man.

His name was Peter Stewart, and he had been in Mr. Jamieson's service about six months, and had previous to that been with a family in Aberdeen. He was supposed to be quite honest, but was under notice to quit, as he was afflicted with incurable laziness. That was the only cause for complaint there was against him. As I could get hold of nothing to justify my suspicions, I could not of course openly accuse Stewart of having connived at the burglary—indeed, I was careful not to let him think that I even suspected him. But I impressed his features on my memory, so that I was never likely to forget them; and I noticed that he walked with a slight, almost imperceptible limp, due as I understood to the kick of a horse when he was a youth. I also thought it worth while to find out something about his antecedents, and to my surprise I learnt that during the time he was with the family in Aberdeen that house had also been robbed, and the thieves had never been caught. He had relatives in Glasgow, and was courting a young woman named Jessie Adams, who was housemaid at an hotel.

As we could get no trace of the burglars, and as the month had nearly expired, I went off to Birmingham, hoping to get on the trail of the "Rev. John Watson," not that I thought for a moment that he would continue to use that name. But it was likely enough that he would continue the *rôle* of the parson, as it was

a character so little calculated to arouse the suspicions of his intended victims. In an interview I had with the chief of the police, I ascertained that about two months before the cheque trick had been performed in Birmingham. The *modus operandi* was almost precisely the same as that followed in Edinburgh. The cheque was drawn on a London bank, but was signed Richard Henry Armstrong. The description of the woman who had carried out the swindle left no doubt on my mind that she was identical with the "Mrs. Lena Methven" who had distinguished herself in Edinburgh, and I was convinced now that a very clever gang of swindlers was at work. I did not at the time connect the Glasgow burglary with these bank-cheque operations, but a little later I began to query in my own mind whether it might not be the work of the same gang. Although I stayed in Birmingham over a week, I was not successful in obtaining any clue. Perhaps the rev. gentleman had altered his plans, and gone further afield. I therefore determined to return to Glasgow and endeavour to solve the mystery of the burglary at Mr. Jamieson's house. The very day that I left Birmingham the papers had an account of a daring burglary committed on the premises of a gentleman residing in rather a lonely district near Doncaster. It was announced that no arrests had been made.

On reaching Glasgow I found that Peter Stewart had left his situation, and nobody seemed to know where he had betaken himself. But by means of his sweetheart, Jessie Adams, I learnt that he had gone to London, ostensibly to look for a situation. She had written to him, addressing her letter to the General Post Office, to be left till called for, and she was expecting an answer

by the next post or two. Several days, however, passed before she got his answer, and he told her that in two or three weeks he would send for her to join him in London, and they would be married. But he gave her no address, and he told her to address to the Post Office again, and she was to be sure to write to him by return of post. The fact of his failing to give an address strengthened my suspicions against the man. I did not get the information from Jessie herself, but from a fellow-servant whom she made her confidante. The result was I made up my mind to be in London when he called at the General Post Office for her reply letter, and I started that very night.

The following day I kept a sharp look-out at the Post Office, but he did not turn up, though I ascertained the letter was lying there for him. The day after, however, he put in an appearance, and I traced him to a house in Bermondsey which had a very unfavourable reputation. It was ostensibly a lodging-house, but was said to be the rendezvous for very questionable characters. An old woman was employed there as a servant, and I managed to interview her one evening as she was returning from a public-house with a big jug of beer. I asked her if there was a lodger in the house known as Peter Stewart, and her answer was—

"Oh, no, there ain't no one of that name in our place."

"But you have a lodger who has recently come to stay there, haven't you?"

"Well, sir, they are always a-coming and going."

"No doubt. But I dare say, now, if I were to give you a sovereign and describe the man, you might tell me if he is there."

"Oh, well, sir, if you ain't wanting nothink else, I dare say as how I can."

She recognized my description, and told me that the young man was called James Nicolson, but he was known in the house as "Scottie."

I understood now why he had his sweetheart's letters addressed to the Post Office, and I had no longer a doubt that he could if he liked give some interesting information about the Glasgow burglary. I therefore resolved to watch him very closely, and I found out that he was in the habit of going down pretty frequently to a house in Twickenham, where he had a chum in the person of a man-servant, named Charles Templeton. A fortnight later that very house was broken into and robbed, plate and jewellery being carried off to a considerable amount. The principal members of the family were away at the time, and a large watch-dog had been kept silent in some way. I pursued some independent inquiries on my own account into this robbery, and discovered that on the night of the robbery Templeton, who was used to the dog, took the animal to a stable in the neighbourhood, where it was kept all night, and the fellow went for it very early in the morning, before the robbery was made known. On the strength of this, I advised the arrest of Templeton, which was done, and I applied for a warrant for Peter Stewart's arrest. By means of some letters found in Stewart's possession, we were enabled ultimately to bring to light a most extraordinary conspiracy, and to throw the meshes of the law over a dozen malefactors. At the head of this conspiracy was a notorious rascal named Robert Finch, who had served a long term of penal servitude. He was a well-educated fellow, with the most plausible manner and remarkable business aptitude, which properly directed might have placed him in an excellent position. As it was, he misapplied

it to conspiring against his fellow-beings. He had actually formed a sort of syndicate, the aim and object being to accumulate wealth by robbery, which was to be equally divided amongst all the conspirators, which included women as well as men, and the services of children were even utilized. We were able to trace home to this firm of rascals and rogues the cheque operations carried on by "Mrs. Lena Methven," who was Robert Finch's mistress. She had successfully performed the trick in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, and other towns besides Edinburgh. The girl who sometimes travelled with her was in reality her niece, and had been carefully trained to pick the pockets of ladies, at which work she was particularly expert. The "Rev. John Watson"—whose real name was John Hopekirk—was another clever member of the gang, and it might be said he was brilliant in his own particular line. He, too, was well educated, and was a member of a good family.

The gang made it their special business to commit burglaries through the instrumentality of servants, to whom prospects of speedily growing rich were held out. In this way Peter Stewart had been corrupted, and had aided and abetted the robbers of his master's premises in Glasgow. He in turn had managed to corrupt Charles Templeton, who was a friend of his, and had thus brought that young man into trouble.

We were enabled to collect such a mass of evidence against the whole band that they were all sentenced to terms of imprisonment, the chief of them being very severely dealt with.

"DUMPY DICK," THE GLASGOW COINER.

One afternoon a woman who kept a small shop in the neighbourhood of the Central Station, Glasgow, entered the office in a state of excitement and indignation, and, flinging down a florin on the table, she exclaimed—

"There's a bad twa-shilling piece that's been passed on me, and it's the second ane in a month, and some of my neighboors have been bitten in the same way. It's just shameful that puir folk should be robbed like that, and it wouldna be if you police did your duty. We pay police taxes for you, and, instead of just walking aboot the streets daein' naething, it wad be mair tae your credit if you were lookin' after the thieves and blackguards what prey on puir folk like me."

The good lady, having let out her abuse of the unfortunate police, and exhausted herself, paused to take breath, and then the officer politely requested her to sit down and cool herself lest she should become ill. And when, all unconscious of the irony, she had complied with the request, he proceeded to examine the coin which she had tossed on the table. It was an exceedingly good imitation of a florin on the face of it, although it would not bear critical examination, while its sounds were so dull and leaden when it was rung that the wonder was anybody should have been deceived by so obvious a fraud. This was pointed out to the irate female, but it only served to arouse her to

still stronger outbursts of temper and abuse of the police, and she demanded to know what the police were for if they were not to protect poor people from being cheated. She also demanded to have a genuine two-shilling piece given to her for the bad one; and when she was informed that no provision was made by the authorities for such an expenditure, she relieved herself of another volley of indignant expletives, and finally took herself off, carrying the spurious coin with her.

It so happened that we had received various complaints for some time about the circulation of false money, but fortunately they had not all been accompanied by the abuse which the lady in question thought proper to hurl at the heads of the police. We had caused notices to be inserted in the papers, cautioning people that false coins were in circulation, but of course it was impossible to entirely stop the passing of those which had already got into the hands of the public. An honest tradesman would, when he got a bad coin, prevent its going out again by destroying it, or sending it in to the authorities; but less scrupulous people, finding themselves victimized, would endeavour to palm the money off on somebody else. And as we thought that this had been the case with the abusive female who imagined that the authorities ought to recoup any one who had accepted bad money, we did not take any special steps in the matter.

I need scarcely say, perhaps, that a certain amount of bad money is always being circulated throughout the country, and if any one is caught in the act of wilfully passing spurious coin the punishment is pretty severe. But perfectly innocent and honest people may tender such coins without knowing that they are bad, and it follows, as a matter of course, that some one in the end

must suffer a loss. The difficulty always in these cases is to trace the origin of the coins. That they have been fraudulently made goes without saying, and equally certain is it that they have been wilfully sent into circulation, but to detect the illicit manufacturer is a most difficult matter. Very frequently he is a man of some capital, and, knowing the risks he runs if caught, he is careful to surround himself with such safeguards as he possibly can, and he carries on his trade by means of accomplices upon whom he can thoroughly rely.

In the Glasgow case I am dealing with we had no reason to believe that the coins that had been passing about were the result of any direct attempt then to foist a quantity of bad money on the public. We considered that they were simply fugitive pieces that had probably been in circulation a long time.

However, soon after we had been honoured with the visit of the lady who was so angry with the police, complaints became so frequent that I was requested to give some attention to the matter, and find out if the coins were being made in Glasgow or not. I therefore obtained a number of the coins, and had them carefully examined by an expert. They proved to be singularly good imitations, and while some were dull and heavy in sound, others rang well, and were in every way calculated to deceive the unwary. They were mostly florins, shillings, and sixpences, these being the coins affected by coiners, who seldom attempt to imitate gold owing to the difficulties in the way thereof. As most of the false money we were enabled to secure was new or nearly new, it was manifest that it had not been long in circulation, and the question to determine was, Where had it come from?

A long time had passed since any systematic attempt had been made in Glasgow to foist bad money on the public. I had succeeded in clearing out a gang of coiners, as I have detailed in one of my previous books, and since then we had not been troubled. But now it could not be doubted that coiners were at work again, and the thing was to unearth them, and stop their nefarious practices.

For several weeks I kept my eyes open, but without result, except that complaints from Glasgow itself pretty well ceased, which showed that the rascals had got wind that the authorities were stirring, and they were holding their hands as far as the city was concerned. But soon reports came from surrounding villages, and also from Paisley and Greenock, that bad money was being passed, and that a good many tradesmen had suffered severely. This seemed corroborative of the view held that the manufactory was in Glasgow or not far off, and I tried various methods to get on the scent, but without avail. The consequence was I came to the conclusion that, owing to the way the secret was kept, very few people were in possession of it. Probably it was confined to one family, who took good care that their affairs should not become known. So matters went on until I almost began to despair of capturing the criminals.

One day, however, it chanced that an old man went into a tobacconist's shop in Sauchiehall Street, and, having purchased three ounces of tobacco and some pipes, he tendered a two-shilling piece, which the shopkeeper tossed into his till, gave the necessary change, and the man went out. He had not been gone, however, more than a minute before a neighbouring tradesman came in to get change for a sovereign, and amongst the change handed to him was the two-shilling

piece. There was something about it that led him to examine it. Perhaps he was a little more 'cute than his brother-trader, any way he sounded it on the counter, and then said he was sure it was bad. The tradesman looked at it, and with a little effort broke it clean in halves by the mere pressure of his fingers. Leaving his neighbour in the shop, he rushed out and succeeded in overtaking the old man who had bought the tobacco, and he accused him of having knowingly passed a bad coin. But the old fellow became furious with indignation; abused the shopkeeper very much; threatened to have him fined for damaging a legitimate coin of the realm; and ended finally by giving the man the price of the tobacco and pipes in genuine money.

It happened that during the altercation between the old man and the shopkeeper a policeman came up and inquired the cause of the disturbance, and when he was told, he asked the shopkeeper if he was willing to give the old fellow into custody, but he declined to take the responsibility of this, for the man seemed so indignant and so sincere that there was the probability he was correct when he said that he himself had received the coin in some change. And so the shopkeeper, having got his money, was content to let the matter drop, and he went back to his shop. But the policeman was not quite so satisfied about the old man's honesty, for he recognized in him a fellow who had been in prison several times, and who was known amongst his class as Dumpy Dick, owing to his being slightly hump-backed, his real name being Richard Fleming. As the policeman had no charge against him, he could not take him into custody, and Dick went away growling and grumbling, and vowing that he would have the law of any one who dared to asperse his honesty.

This incident was reported to me, and I resolved to look into Mr. Richard Fleming's history, and by dint of patient investigation I found that he had commenced life as a tinsmith and plumber, and for some years had been in business on his own account. He fell into difficulties ultimately, and went into the Bankruptcy Court; and having attempted to defraud his creditors out of some of their property, he suffered imprisonment, and on his release he joined the Navy as an artificer. But after three years' service he was discharged for misconduct, and returned to his native town, Glasgow. It was not long after his return before he again got into trouble through obtaining goods under false pretences, and for that bit of business he suffered a term of imprisonment. Subsequently, he was again imprisoned for a desperate assault on a woman with whom he lived.

It will thus be seen that Mr. Dumpy Dick's record was not of a nature to inspire one with confidence in his integrity. Moreover, his associates were of a character no respectable man would have cared to be identified with; and altogether Dumpy Dick was looked upon as a somewhat notorious character. Ostensibly he made his living by keeping a little shop in a street off the Saltmarket, where he sold and bought old pots and pans, second-hand gas-fittings, and the like.

At this time Dumpy Dick was well advanced in years, being upwards of sixty-five; but he was a hale and apparently hearty man, notwithstanding that he indulged a good deal in strong drink.

Having learnt so much about Dick, I resolved to keep an eye upon him; but I saw nothing that really warranted me in supposing that he was manufacturing false coins. But that he was a thorough-paced rascal

I had not a doubt. I learnt, too, that his expenditure must be largely in excess of his takings in his shop, and of course I asked myself where he got his money from. I was convinced from his style and character that it was not got honestly, and that he must be engaged in some transactions that were more profitable than his shop, which, I felt sure, was kept up merely as a blind. Dumpy was married, his partner being his junior by at least twenty-five years. It was said that he had been married four or five times, and had a numerous family—so the rumour ran—but nobody seemed to know where the members of his family were. His wife was a buxom, rather good-looking woman, but with a cast of countenance and a general expression not calculated to inspire any one with confidence who had the slightest pretensions to judge character from the face. She gave one an idea that she was as cunning as a fox and as deep as a well. At least, that was the opinion I formed of her. But I resolved to try and trap her into some admissions that might be of value to me in my endeavours to read her husband's secrets, for that he had secrets which he did not deem it advisable should be generally known I was convinced.

Choosing an hour when I knew Mr. Dumpy Dick was absent, I waited upon his good lady in the character of one who was desirous of doing business which was not of a nature which the police would have considered legitimate.

"Is the governor at home?" I asked.

"No," was the somewhat surly answer. "What do you want with him?"

I affected to be disconcerted by her brusque manner, and looking askance I answered—

"Well, mistress, my business with him is private."

She eyed me keenly as she said—

"I know all his affairs. It would be a bad job for him if I didn't, so if you have anything to say you can tell me."

"I would rather not," I responded shyly.

"Then what do you come bothering here for? Take yourself off."

"All right, mistress, but you needn't jump down my throat as though I had done you an injury. I simply wanted to see if I could do a trade with the old man."

I saw that her curiosity was aroused, and she gazed at me as if she was trying to read my thoughts. But hers was not a steady gaze, she looked at one furtively, and in a manner that was by no means suggestive of a frank and candid nature.

"Where do you come from?" she asked suddenly.

"From Manchester."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Oh, I'm on the look-out for any job that turns up."

"Do you know my old man?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever done any business with him?"

"No."

"Then how is it you've come to him now?"

"Well, mistress, it's this way. I was recommended to him by a pal in Manchester."

She paused, having fired off her string of questions, and again she eyed me in that peculiar, furtive way. And presently she said in a confidential tone—

"Now, look here, you tell me what your business is."

"I'd rather not, mum. I'd like to see the governor."

This reply angered her, and she exclaimed—

"You fool! haven't I told you that I know all his affairs, and what you've got to tell you can tell to me?"

I seemed to hesitate, and appeared undecided, but at last remarked—

"You see, mum, I don't know whether I'd be right in telling you."

She became more irritated at this, my object being to irritate her, as I thought that in that condition she would be less guarded.

"You're an idiot!" she rasped out, with an angry hiss.

"Thank you, mum."

"So you are, or you wouldn't stand there beating about the bush like that."

"Well, you see, missus, a poor chap like me cannot be too cautious. One never knows when the traps will be down on one, and I don't want to be lagged."

This fetched her, as I anticipated it would, and she gave herself away by the remark—

"If you've got anything to plant you're safe here, I tell you. So open up, and let's know what it is."

"Well, you seem all right," I answered, and feeling elated as I saw that she was fluttering into the web I had spread for her. "I suppose I can trust you," I added. Here I dived into the pocket of my coat and produced a common tin tobacco-box, from which I took four spurious florins, each one carefully wrapped up in tissue paper. Opening the paper that enveloped them, I held one before her and asked—

"Do you think the old man will do a trade in these things?"

Perhaps I need scarcely tell the reader that these counterfeit coins were some that I had obtained from

different sources in the course of my investigations, and of course I had no intention of letting her have them.

I noted that my lady's eyes opened with some surprise, and she said—

"It's dangerous to show these things here. Come in the back room."

She was fairly netted now, I thought, for this was practically an admission that she knew all about the business, and was familiar with spurious coins. The conversation up to this moment had been carried on in the shop; but now she led the way to a back apartment shut off from the shop by a half-glazed door that was screened by a muslin curtain. As soon as we reached the room, and she had closed the door, she took the coins from me and examined them carefully by means of a magnifying-glass, and having done so, she turned to me and asked—

"Where did you get these things from?"

"I got them in Manchester."

"Did you trade for them, or are you in the line?"

What she meant by asking me if I was in the line was, did I do the smashing myself. "Smashing" is a slang term used amongst the fraternity for coining.

"No; I'm not in the line, but a pal of mine is, and he's got the plant. I'm trying to do trade for him, and put something in my own way."

"Well, now, look here, cully," she said, with that vulgar familiarity peculiar to her class, "you'll have to keep your weather-eye open here, I tell you, for it's dangerous quarters. The cops in this town have got wind, and a blooming idiot named Donovan is smelling round like a ratter. If he gets on your track he'll make it hot for you, I tell you."

I took the coins up in a hurry, appeared to be very much disconcerted, and, as I thrust them into my pocket again, I said dolefully—

"Well, in these blooming times a cove can't live. If you're honest you starve, and if you ain't honest the cops come down on you like vultures. They don't give a fellow a chance now. I was recommended to your old man, and thought I might have done a trade and picked up a trifle for myself."

"I tell you we can't be too careful. The cops have got their eye on my man as it is, and he's not going to get lagged if he can help it. He likes to enjoy himself, he does, and one can't do that behind iron bars."

"That's true, missus," I said, with a whine. "But, there, it's no use a-taking up your time any more. Maybe, though, you can put me on a lay where I can part with the stuff."

"No, I don't know any one here," she answered, "unless you mug them on some shopkeeper yourself."

"That's risky," I said, "but I'll try it. Well, good day to you, mum, and I'm much obliged to you."

I opened the door, and was going out, when she cried—

"Stop a minute. How many of those things have you got?"

"I've got four with me."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a shilling for them."

"No, mum, thank you," I answered, "it ain't good enough. I can do better than that. There are plenty of mugs in the town that will take 'em."

"Well, they are not worth more," she remarked. "The risk is too great, and if you take my advice you'll not try to trade them in Glasgow at all. The

place is too hot. There's been a regular rumpus going on, and everybody have got their eyes opened. The shopkeepers look at every coin now that's offered them, and if they suspect the smasher it's all up, so you had better be careful."

I thanked her for her advice and left, highly delighted with the success of my little ruse, for I felt sure now that I should land Dumpy Dick, for I hadn't a doubt that he was a coiner, and the evidence I had got justified me in obtaining an order to search his premises. To my great astonishment my search resulted in nothing. That is, I found nothing, thorough as the search was, that justified the suspicion I entertained. Not a coiner's tool nor a spurious coin of any kind was found.

I was disappointed, but not daunted. The cunning of the rascal had enabled him to outwit me for the time, but from what had transpired between me and his wife, it was, to my mind, absolutely certain that both he and she were well acquainted with the unlawful calling, and I was resolved to get to the bottom of the mystery. Of course, Dumpy Dick crowed loudly at my discomfiture, and he and his wife expressed their feelings for me in language that made up in strength what it lacked in polish. But I was content to wait, feeling pretty sure that, sooner or later, the laugh would be on my side. Notwithstanding that I thought this, I have no hesitation in confessing that I was greatly puzzled about Dumpy, for I could not quite understand how it was he had managed to outwit me, for he certainly had outwitted me temporarily.

This idea having taken deep root in my mind, my vigilance, I need scarcely say, was redoubled, for I had no intention to rest quietly under my defeat. Whatever the mystery was, I was determined to solve it.

One evening, pretty late, and about two months after I had searched Dumpy Dick's premises, I was coming down Buchanan Street, when I overtook Dick, who was in front of me. He did not notice me, and it suddenly occurred to me to follow him. When he reached the end of Buchanan Street, where it joins Argyle Street, he waited and looked up and down, as if he was expecting somebody. Presently, he began to get restless, and paced to and fro with every manifestation of irritability. At last, he was joined by a woman, and the woman was his wife. They stood talking for a few moments, and then proceeded east, and I concluded that they were going to their home out of the Saltmarket. But in this I was mistaken. They held on their way along the Trongate for some distance, until suddenly they turned up a little street going north, and about midway stopped before an untenanted shop, the shutters of which were covered with bills of a miscellaneous character. The whole building indeed looked forlorn and dilapidated; and a board projecting from an upper story window announced the "house and shop to let." Dumpy Dick produced a key from his pocket, and having glanced around and up and down to see that no one was observing him, he opened the door of the empty house, and he and his wife went in, closing the door behind him.

"Now then," I thought, "I have solved the mystery."

I waited for fully an hour before they reappeared. Then they turned their steps homewards, and I followed them to their residence. I could hardly help a chuckle as it occurred to me that at last I had run my man to earth.

The following morning I began to follow up the clue I had obtained, and I discovered to my surprise that

the shop and premises were Dumpy Dick's property, and though he could have let them over and over again, he would not do so, and preferred, apparently, to let them fall into ruin. That in itself was a strongly suspicious circumstance, and quite justified me in the course I felt called upon to pursue, which was to obtain the necessary legal authority to enter the premises and make a search. Having obtained the authority, I proceeded with two colleagues to the house, but we had to force the door with a crowbar in order to gain admission. The shop itself contained a miscellaneous assortment of rubbish, consisting principally of old boxes and mouldy straw, from which emanated a damp, earthy smell like that of a tomb. At the back of the shop was a large room, the windows of which were entirely blocked up with boards, and we had to procure candles. Then our trouble was well rewarded. The room was fitted up as a workshop, with every appliance and all the plant for carrying on the trade of coining There were moulds of all kinds, including some for sixpences, shillings, half-crowns, and five-shilling pieces. There were several bags of plaster of paris, a number of clams, two or three hundredweights of bars of solder, a quantity of fine sand used by coiners for polishing, a bar of real silver, a very complete electric battery, a polishing board, a large assortment of files, a large bottle of nitric acid, and another of muriatic acid, delicately balanced scales in a glass case for weighing the coins, and various other tools and instruments used by smashers in their nefarious business. It was, in fact, the most complete coiner's plant I had ever managed to seize, and represented an outlay of capital of between two and three hundred pounds. There was nothing, in fact, wanting to enable the rascal to carry

on his work, at which he was evidently no 'prentice hand.

But in addition to the working tools, there was stock-in-trade representing a very large sum. In one box we found, packed in cork-dust, one thousand two hundred and fifty florins. In another were five hundred shillings, and in another six hundred half-crowns. There was also a large box, nailed up and corded, ready to be despatched, and on it was a card bearing the name and address of a person in Birmingham. On opening this box we found spurious coins representing all the silver values with the exception of threepenny-pieces, and numbering several thousands. I ought also to mention that in one corner of the room was a proper furnace for melting metal, and the flue had been most artfully carried into a neighbouring chimney of a house that was occupied. The object of this was obvious. It was to prevent any suspicions being aroused by allowing the smoke to issue from the chimney of the untenanted house. Indeed, the whole arrangement of the place evidenced an amount of ingenuity and artfulness that was astonishing, and proved that Dumpy Dick had engaged in the business with a thoroughness that was rare in the annals of crime.

My first impulse was to remove all the things off the premises at once, but it suddenly occurred that it would be better, if possible, to take the rascal *in flagrante delicto*, and I gave orders that the things were to be restored to the order in which we had found them. The packed box of coins addressed to Birmingham made it pretty clear that it would not be long before Dumpy came to his workshop and sent the goods away to the person who was no doubt his agent, and whom I was anxious to net also, if possible. So we retired,

and set a close watch on the premises. But it was not until the next evening that Dumpy turned up, accompanied by the "missus." They entered the house, and half an hour later two men arrived with a hand-cart and knocked at the door. Dumpy let them in, and presently they came out again bearing the box of coins addressed to Birmingham, and they carted it off to the railway station. I thereupon gave orders to one of my assistants to proceed by the next train to Birmingham, place himself at once in communication with the police there, and obtain a warrant to arrest the consignee of the box as soon as he received it.

Then I and my colleagues posted ourselves at the door of Dumpy's place and waited for developments. In the course of half an hour or so, his wife came out with only a shawl over her head, but we took no action then, as I felt sure that she was only going on some errand. But one of my men followed her, and she went to a public-house to get some whisky. When she returned and had opened the door with her latch-key, we pounced upon her to her utter amazement, and while one held her the rest of us rushed in.

We found Dumpy in his shirt-sleeves, and working like a nigger. He was busy packing coins, but the furnace was all aglow, and a cauldron of metal was heating ready for operations. It was clear that the fellow intended to work all night, for it was then nearly eleven o'clock, and on a table in the room were the necessaries for a very substantial supper, including a roast fowl.

For a moment Dick was struck dumb by the sudden and unexpected apparition of the officers of justice. Then he glanced about him very nervously as if in search of some weapon, but I pounced upon him, and

in a few moments had him handcuffed. He made no struggle. He recognized that his game was up, and with a melancholy smile he said—

"I'm played out, and I own it. The game's yours."

"Yes," I answered, with keen satisfaction, "I've waited patiently for this moment, and patience is generally rewarded."

Recognizing as he did that the end had truly come, he submitted like a lamb that is being led to the slaughter. But not so his "better-half." She struggled and fought like a newly caught hyena, and we were compelled, though reluctantly, to handcuff her; and that done, the precious pair were conveyed to the station, and the next day all the plant was removed, a large waggon being necessary for the purpose. As I proceeded with the case and pursued my investigations, I recognized more fully the importance of my capture, for the revelations I was enabled to make were truly astonishing, and seemed more like a romance than reality. Not only had Dumpy Dick been engaged in coining for years, but the ramifications of his wicked trade extended over all the country, and he had agents and sub-agents in most of the principal towns of the kingdom.

The man in Birmingham to whom the box of coins was addressed turned out to be scarcely less notorious than Dumpy Dick himself. He had served a long term of penal servitude for forgery, and he was in the habit of buying the coins wholesale from Dumpy, and retailing them out to people who palmed them off on unsuspecting shopkeepers. We found that the price paid to Dumpy was about forty per cent. of the face value of the various coins, which, considering the risk he

ran, and the capital he had invested, was not an extravagant price. The other sixty per cent. was, of course, divided between his wholesale and the retail customers. Neither Dumpy nor his wife ever attempted to pass the coins themselves. They were simply manufacturers, and supplied what might be termed the dealers. The whole transaction, in fact, was founded upon the strictest commercial lines, and organized with consummate skill and tact that was worthy of a better cause.

It only remains for me to say that by the day of trial I had such a mass of evidence at command that I was enabled to unfold one of the most startling and remarkable stories of crime that was ever told in a court of law. Of course the Mint authorities took the matter up, and in addition to the arch offenders—Dumpy Dick and his wife and their agent in Birmingham—we netted a good many of the smaller fry, and thoroughly broke up this desperate gang of coiners.

Dumpy's career was ended, as he was sent to prison for life, while his wife got off with seven years, and the Birmingham man with ten. I had the satisfaction of being highly complimented from headquarters for having trapped the offenders and put a stop to a most infamous trade. And even the good woman who had received the bad florin, and been so violent in her abuse of the police, admitted that they were of some use after all.

THE TINKER'S DOOM.

One winter evening a travelling tinker, named William Sutherland, and his wife, Sarah, entered Edinburgh from the south, after many weeks of tramping about in pursuit of their calling. William Sutherland was known amongst his associates by the cognomen of "Tin Pot Bill," and in many ways he was a remarkable character. He stood over six feet in height, and was of a build that gave him unusual strength. It might be said that he had a giant's strength, and used it like a giant—that is, brutally, for he was notorious as having been very frequently convicted of assault. Tin Pot Bill's wanderings extended from John o' Groat's to Land's End, and it is not too much to say that he was feared and hated by the whole travelling fraternity. He had but one argument, and that was the fist. To differ from him on any subject was to run the risk of being immediately floored, and when he was in his cups, which was pretty frequent, he was about as disagreeable a human brute as could have been met with anywhere. He was exceedingly well known to the police, whom he was in the habit of boasting he hated like "pisen," and he never allowed an opportunity to slip of giving practical effect to this hatred, the result being that between him and the police there was never-ceasing war. Four or five constables had been maimed by him, one being crippled for life. Of course he suffered for this amusement of policeman-baiting, but

no amount of punishment seemed to deter him or improve him. He was a veritable savage, and in America or Australia, and even on some parts of the Continent, he would have been dealt with in a very summary manner, for some one would have put a bullet through him without the slightest compunction; but in this country we claim to have a higher regard for human life.

Now, there was one peculiarity in connection with Tin Pot Bill that is worth recording, and perhaps it serves to prove that, savage as he was, he had one vulnerable spot in his heart which rendered him susceptible to a kindly influence. Although brutal to every one else, he was remarkably gentle to Sarah, his wife. It is not out of place to state here that he had married her in accordance with gipsy rites, which, although not recognized by the Church, are considered binding and legal by the gipsy fraternity; and I believe that even as a matter of law the rites are binding. Anyway, in Sarah's hands he was as potter's clay, and if any one had ventured to assert that she was not lawfully his, there would of a certainty have been bloodshed. She was only about half his age, being little more than twenty, and of a pure gipsy type. She would have passed indeed for a Spanish woman, so dark and swarthy was she, and she had beauty of a certain kind, a beauty which found peculiar favour in Bill's eyes, and he was fiercely jealous of her. But his voice was never raised in anger to her, and she could control him when everybody and everything else were utterly powerless to do so. That he was fond of the woman—passionately fond of her—was beyond all doubt, but it is by no means certain that she cared for him, although she professed to do so, and what is more,

she stuck to him, and wandered with him all over the country. They were vagrants in the strictest sense, and often their only roof was the sky, and their only lodging the lee side of a hedgerow.

Tin Pot Bill usually passed the winter in Edinburgh or its immediate neighbourhood, and during the time he lived upon such money as he had picked up in the summer. Bill did not like work. He only did it by compulsion—that is, when his exchequer was exhausted. But he was by no means very particular how he got money so long as he did get it; and Bill's notions of honour and honesty were not such as would have recommended themselves to scrupulous and conscientious men. In short, Bill was a thorough-paced blackguard, and one of the dangerous pests of society. He was gifted with a fair amount of native intelligence and a certain power of oratory that enabled him to put to silence any one in his own sphere who ventured to match himself against him.

Bill's favourite haunt was a well-known and notorious house in a wynd at the bottom of the Canongate which was indicated amongst the fraternity as "The Fluffers' Doss." It was the resort of cadgers and crimps, thieves and tramps, and scenes were often enacted there that were enough to make the angels weep. Although the police had access to the place, they were at that time powerless to close it, but subsequently succeeded in doing so, though it was certain that the human rats were only driven elsewhere, and not exterminated. However, that is a matter in which I am not at present concerned. In this unsalubrious den Tin Pot Bill and his wife put up, and, being tramps of quality, they occupied a private room; and in order to make intelligible what follows, I must describe this room in detail, and its position in the house.

The entrance to "The Fluffers' Doss" was through a low, pointed archway; thence up a flight of corkscrew stone stairs. Then a narrow door gave access to a passage, and on this first floor were a kitchen, a large common sleeping-room, in which twenty to thirty lodgers were often crowded in one night, and two or three smaller rooms. A flight of wooden stairs led to a second flat, on which were about nine other rooms, mostly small ones. The room that Bill and his wife rented was just on the landing facing the stairs. It was lighted by a small window that was immediately above the roof of a low building that was partly used as a stable, and which was rented by a grocer, whose shop faced the Canongate.

In this room, about three weeks after his arrival, Tin Pot Bill was one morning found dead. What is more, he had been savagely and brutally murdered. It seemed, indeed, as if he had been killed by a madman, for the body was hacked and gashed in a perfectly sickening manner. Two days previous his wife had gone to Glasgow to see a relative who was dying in the poor-house, and she was absent at the time the crime was committed. For many days Bill had been drinking heavily, and on the night of his death had gone to bed in a state of beastly intoxication, and did not trouble himself to remove even his boots. As soon as the crime was discovered notice was given to the police, and I went down to the den to investigate the matter. I found that on that particular night about thirty people had slept in the house, and many of them being birds of passage, they had already gone before the murder was known. This, of course, rendered detection exceedingly difficult, for it was impossible even to get a description of the people. The nightly lodgers came and went, and as long as they paid the few pence demanded for the

accommodation afforded no further notice was taken of them. I found, beyond all question of doubt, that the murderer had made his entrance by the window, and he had mounted to the roof of the stable by means of a ladder reared against the wall. In making his escape he had left a track of blood on the window-sill, the slates, and the ladder. The evidence of his having entered by the window consisted of a broken pane of glass, by which means the latch of the window had been undone. The window being seldom opened, some difficulty had been experienced in getting it up, and physical force had been used to such an extent that the woodwork which held the sash in position had been broken away. The floor of the room, which, it is needless to say, was carpetless, revealed the fact that the murderer had been barefooted, for, having tramped in the blood of his victim, he left a clear print of his naked foot on the boards. The same impression was also discernible on the slates, though less distinctly. I was able to determine that he had worn boots, and divested himself of them in the yard previous to mounting the ladder to carry out his fiendish work, and had put them on again when he descended. This was made clear by scratches and dints on a wooden gate which he had climbed both going and coming. The ground outside the gate was soft and squashy, and showed several impressions of heavily nailed boots. The same impressions were also observable on the yard side of the gate, and on the gate itself and on the bar that secured it were pieces of the mud which the boots had carried there. These signs seemed to point to a very deliberately planned crime, which had been carried out with a barbarity happily rare. On the victim's body were no fewer than fourteen stabs, almost any one of which was

sufficient to have caused death. One of these wounds penetrated the heart, and if it was the first inflicted death must have been instantaneous. In addition, the flesh had been hacked in an extraordinary manner, as though the murderer had taken a fiendish delight in mutilating the body. The face had been so gashed that it was scarcely recognizable, and one ear had been completely cut off.

Although the crime was of such an atrocious character, the people about the house and in the neighbourhood were perfectly callous, and laughed and joked after the manner of their class. Of course Tin Pot Bill was not a favourite, nor was he beloved; therefore his death, terrible as it was, aroused no sympathy. On the contrary, it seemed rather to be a matter for rejoicing. His wife certainly affected to be much cut up, but I was convinced that her grief was not sincere, which, considering how tender Bill had been to her, was a matter for some surprise. From the moment I began to investigate the crime I saw that difficulties of no ordinary kind confronted me, for most of the people I had to deal with were brutal and ignorant and stupid, and such information as I was enabled to get from them I had to drag from them, as it were. Naturally, I questioned his wife very closely indeed, in my endeavours to find out if she had ever heard any one threaten her husband, or if she knew of any one who had cherished revenge against him. But she, like all the rest, was very reluctant to tell anything; the gist of her replies to my questions was negative, and she could not, or would not, formulate any theory as to why her man had been so shockingly done to death. It was pretty clear to my mind that revenge had been the motive which had actuated the

criminal, for it was absurd to think of robbery; and, as a matter of fact, a few shillings were found in Bill's pocket, and also an old silver watch that was worth another few shillings. Why, then, had he been murdered if not out of revenge? And if that was correct, who was likely to have wished him dead, if not somebody who had suffered at his hands?

In due course Tin Pot Bill, the ruffian, was buried, and thus ended his wanderings and strange career. He had been cut off in what should have been the very prime of his life, and probably he had very rarely, if ever, thought of death. But it had come to him like a thief in the night, and his gigantic strength had not saved him from the assassin's wrath. Although he was a worthless character, and it is doubtful if he fulfilled any good purpose in the world, his taking off was as serious an offence in the eyes of the law as would have been the slaying of a philanthropist, and I relaxed no effort to unravel the mystery, but I failed to obtain a clue of any kind, and I resolved to try and get some light on the matter by questioning his widow.

"I understand that your husband was a very rough sort of character?" I began.

"Well, he wasn't altogether an angel," she answered, with a coarse laugh.

"And he gave offence to almost every one he had dealings with?"

"I don't know that he did. Some folk couldn't get on with him, but he was right enough if no one crossed him."

"Ah! just so," I answered; "but from what I understood, people were always crossing him, and he was always in hot water. Was that not so?"

"He was a bit quarrelsome, but, Lor' bless you, he ain't the only one what is that. Bill wasn't half a bad sort, I tell you."

"Now, do you remember any one amongst his acquaintances who was likely to do such a deed as this?"

"Well, I dare say there was plenty as would have done it if they had got the chance."

"Why do you think that?"

"'Cos Bill was always a-making enemies."

"Yes, that I understand, but what I want to get at is whether there is any particular individual you can indicate as being likely to have committed the crime, to revenge either some real or fancied wrong."

She looked at me with a strange sneering expression on her face, and then said with a callousness that could only be described as brutal—

"I know nothing about it, master. Bill didn't tell me all his secrets. He was always insulting somebody, and I ain't a bit surprised that he got killed. He had a' awful tongue, and the wonder is some one didn't do for him afore this. He deserves what he's got."

I need scarcely say, perhaps, that I was greatly surprised at this answer. It seemed to reveal the woman to me in a perfectly new light. I had up to this moment considered that she was sincerely grieved at the fellow's sad end; but now my thoughts changed, and I worked out a totally different theory of the crime. It had previously seemed to me to be a low, brutal, commonplace tragedy, the sole motive of which was revenge, the murderer cherishing such hatred for the victim that it found vent in the hideous mutilation of the body. But now I saw the matter from a different point of view, and I felt more hopeful of

bringing the crime home; and, with a view to that end, I began on totally different lines to try and obtain the key-thread that would enable me to unravel the tangled skein.

Perhaps I need scarcely say that the opinion I had come to was that Tin Pot Bill's widow was not entirely innocent of his death. I don't mean that she had actually committed the tragedy, but after my interview with her, and the callousness she displayed, I could not help believing that she knew something about the crime, and could have given me valuable information if she had been so disposed. I therefore resolved to trace her history as far as it was possible to do so, in the hope that I might thus find a thread which would lead me to the desired end.

It will be remembered that on the night of the crime at the Fluffers' Doss the woman was absent in Glasgow, whither she had gone to visit a relative. This relative was a half-sister, who for a long time had been in the infirmary of the poorhouse, suffering from cancer. Her name was Margaret Joy, and as it occurred to me that I might get some valuable information from her, I paid her a visit. She was in a very sad state, poor thing, and evidently nearing her end. I soon found that she was in entire ignorance of the crime; but though I did not tell her what my business was beyond saying that I should like her to give me any particulars she could of her half-sister's history, she at once jumped to the conclusion that something was wrong, and with a painful expression of anxiety she exclaimed—

"I hope our Sal hasn't been doing anything wrong again."

The words "anything wrong again" were suggestive, and I remarked—

"Has she ever been in trouble?"

"How do you mean?" demanded Joy.

"Well, has she ever committed any offence against the law?"

Margaret Joy remained silent for some moments, but at last answered—

"Our Sal hasn't always been as good as she might be."

"By that do you mean that she has been in trouble?"

"I believe she once got a month's hard labour in Wolverhampton for nearly gouging out a woman's eyes."

"Indeed! Do you know what the quarrel was about?"

"Oh, about some bloke, I believe."

"How long ago is that?"

"I can't remember now."

"Was she married to Tin Pot Bill then?"

"Yes."

This bit of information was significant, and I resolved to inquire more fully into it, as it was calculated to be of service in assisting me to unravel the mystery. Having got from Joy certain particulars regarding her half-sister's early career and place of birth, I took my departure, and lost no time in verifying the story of the assault in Wolverhampton. I found that Sarah had some six years previously been convicted of having seriously injured a woman named Lucy Martin. It appeared that Martin had for some time been living with an Italian named Giacomo Prisani, who gained a livelihood by selling clay images in the street. There had been an intrigue between Sarah and Prisani of which Martin did not approve, and she remonstrated with Sarah. A quarrel was the inevitable consequence, and it ended

in Sarah falling upon Martin, and so beating and mauling her that the unfortunate woman was laid up for two months in the hospital. For that little exploit Sarah got a month's hard labour, and so the incident ended. But there was a sequel to the story which was full of significance.

It appeared that while his wife was in prison Tin Pot Bill was lying ill of a fever in Manchester. When Sarah had served her time and was released she did not rejoin her husband, but disappeared for several weeks, and, as I attached great importance to that fact, I set to work to trace her movements during the time, and, though I did not quite succeed, I learnt sufficient to leave little doubt in my mind that she had been away with Prisani.

Three months later Tin Pot Bill and his wife were at Lincoln races, when a quarrel arose between Bill and another man, and ended in a fight. Bill's opponent very decidedly got the worst of it. Bill was arrested, and on being brought before the magistrates, he was sentenced to a fine of five pounds, or thirty days' imprisonment. He paid the fine, however, and went his way.

Now, this incident itself would have had no particular meaning for me, but for the fact which I easily ascertained from the police records, that the man who had been beaten by Bill was an Italian named Prisani. Here, then, was matter for reflection, especially when taken in connection with the assault committed by Sarah on Lucy Martin at Wolverhampton. That assault was due to jealousy, and it was clear as daylight that the cause of Bill's attack on Prisani at Lincoln races was jealousy also.

It seemed to me now that I had got a motive for the crime, and my theory was this. There had been an

intrigue between Sarah and Prisani, which Bill had got to know of. At Lincoln the rivals met, and there was war. The Italian was badly beaten, and he treasured up his wrath against the day when an opportunity might occur to enable him to take his revenge; for it was proverbial of his countrymen, at any rate of the class of Italians that he represented, that they did not readily forgive a real or fancied wrong. That opportunity had come at last in Edinburgh, and the crafty Italian had wreaked a terrible revenge on his rival, with or possibly without the knowledge of Sarah. But was it not likely enough that the woman had purposely absented herself from Edinburgh during the time the tragedy was being enacted? This idea seemed to fit in well with the theory I was working out, and pointed to a well-laid and most deliberate plan for Tin Pot Bill's taking off. What was essential now for the confirmation of the soundness of the theory was to discover if on the night of the tragedy Prisani had been in Edinburgh. If it could be proved that he had, the links I had so far gathered would shape themselves into a very powerful chain of evidence, and I might thus be able to bring the crime home to the criminal. In spite, however, of all my efforts I could not get the slightest trace of Prisani's presence in Edinburgh, nor could I even find out where he was at that period, and I therefore resolved to have another interview with Sarah in the hope that I might trap her into some admission which would put me on the trail I wished to take up.

It goes without saying that the inquiries so far had taken up considerable time. In fact, many weeks had elapsed since the commission of the murder, and Sarah had disappeared, while her half-sister had joined the

great majority, and that source of information was closed for ever. However, I learnt at last through the people in the Fluffers' Doss that Sarah was "on the road" in the North of Scotland. That was somewhat indefinite, for the North of Scotland was a wide field in which to search for any particular individual. But I was not discouraged, and by persistent inquiries I ascertained at last that Sarah was at Perth. Thither I journeyed in search of her, and my search was rewarded. She was very much surprised to see me again, and she exclaimed coarsely—

"What, are you still on the same blooming job?"

"Yes, Sarah," I answered, "I am. It is not my habit to give up the pursuit of my quarry easily, and I am going to bring the murderer of your husband to justice."

"Are you?" she remarked in a strange manner, and, as it seemed to me, a half-frightened expression on her face.

"Yes," I answered, "and I want you to help me."

"Me?" she cried, with a look of amazement.

"Yes."

"How am I to help you?" she added, before I could say anything further. "I know nothing about the murder."

"I shall find out presently perhaps how you can help me," I said; "but first of all, let me ask you this question, are you really desirous that the murderer of your husband shall be brought to justice?"

"Of course I am," she answered, but in that answer there was not an atom of sincerity. Still, I did not deem it prudent to let her know that I noticed this.

"Then, since you are so desirous," I continued, "I will ask you a question that I asked you once before. Is there any one you know of who cherished a feeling of revenge against your husband?"

"I cannot mind of any one."

"Don't you think that the Italian, Giacomo Prisani, did so?"

This question had an extraordinary effect on the woman. She turned deadly pale, and looked at me with a nervous, scared look, and then, in a husky voice that betrayed her agitation, that she tried so hard to suppress, she remarked—

"I know nothing of Prisani."

"Don't you?" I said caustically; "and yet you must be aware that he was the cause of your committing so serious an assault on Lucy Martin in Wolverhampton."

"How do you know that?" she fairly gasped.

"Oh, that is one of many things I have learnt," I replied, with a little laugh.

"But what has that got to do with the murder?" she asked, with great anxiety manifested in every look and movement.

"I don't know yet," I said; it may have a very important bearing on the case; and now I must try to jog your memory still further. Some time after the Wolverhampton affair your husband and Prisani quarrelled at Lincoln races, and Bill mercilessly thrashed Prisani. You remember that?"

"Yes," she answered, with a look of despair on her swarthy face.

"Now, answer me. What did the two men quarrel about?"

"I don't know."

"You are uttering a wilful and deliberate falsehood."

"A curse on you for saying so!" she exclaimed, with a sudden upleaping of passion, while fire flashed from her dark eyes.

"Never mind your curses," I said. "Reserve your breath for something better. Now, you know perfectly well that you were the cause of the quarrel between your husband and Prisani."

"I know nothing of the sort," she growled.

"Yes, you do."

"Why should they quarrel about me?"

"Bill was jealous of Prisani."

Here she broke into a wild, mocking laugh, and echoed the word "Jealous."

"Yes," I continued, "and you know that he had good cause to be jealous."

"I don't," she answered, with a suppressed fierceness. "But if he was, he had nothing to be jealous about."

"Yes he had, for Prisani made love to you."

"And what if he did?" she demanded, in the same fierce manner. "It wasn't my fault that he fell in love with me."

"Perhaps not, and perhaps yes; but we won't discuss that point. You will admit now that your Bill and Prisani quarrelled."

"Yes."

"And Bill thrashed his opponent?"

"Yes."

"So far, then, we are making progress. Now, answer me this. From what you know of Prisani, do you think he is a man likely to cherish revengeful feelings?"

"No, Prisani is as quiet and harmless as a lamb."

"When did you see him last?" I asked suddenly and abruptly. But it was evident she was on her guard, and she was able to control her features now, which did not reveal much unless it was that she was not speaking the truth when she answered—

"I have not seen nor heard of him for a long time."

"How long?"

"I don't know."

"Months, perhaps?"

"Yes, months. Many months."

"But he was in Edinburgh just before the murder." I said this very suddenly and quickly, and watched her narrowly.

"How do you know that?" she asked, without betraying any signs of trepidation.

"As I know a good many more things."

Whether she divined that I had no actual knowledge on the subject or not I don't know, but she answered boldly—

"Then, if you know that he was in Edinburgh, you know what I don't know, for I haven't seen him for many a month.

Let me say here in the most emphatic manner that I did not believe this statement for a moment, and yet I saw that I was dealing with an artful and crafty woman, who would not, if she could help it, let her tongue betray her. It will, of course, be understood that my assumption all along was that she had guilty knowledge, and therefore I did not deem it prudent to put her on her guard, or frighten her by letting her suppose I had got any direct clue. If she was made aware that I really suspected Prisani, she would do all she could to

warn him and defeat me. I knew that, and so I acted accordingly, and said in a careless, off-hand way—

"Oh, well, I suppose I'm wrong. But can you not suggest where Prisani is to be found?"

"No, I can't," she answered shortly. "I've no idea."

"Well," I remarked, as I prepared to leave her, "I'm afraid your husband's cruel death will go unavenged."

"Yes, I suppose it will," she answered, in a cold-blooded way, as though she rather hoped that it would, and she immediately added—"But Bill got his deserts. He wronged many a cove, and somebody copped him at last."

"And yet he was good enough to you," I said.

"Of course he was; because if he hadn't been I'd a jolly soon have cleared out. I wouldn't have stood any of his nonsense. If he had knocked me about he would have got as good as he gave. Blow me, if I wouldn't have knifed him myself!"

This answer corroborated the opinion I had formed of the woman, which was that she was a cruel, calculating, crafty creature, full of deceit, and capable of any wickedness. It was not my intention to lose sight of her if I could help it, but to constantly shadow one who led such a nomadic life as she did was a very difficult matter; but I resolved to keep an eye on her for a few days at any rate, and I found that the following day she took train and went to Ayr, where a fair was being held. Thither I followed her, and to my amazement I saw that she was met at the station by a man whose cast of features and general style proclaimed him a foreigner, and I had no hesitation in concluding that he was no other than Prisani. The precious pair went to a lodging-house together, and that night they indulged in a drinking

bout, and became so very noisy and quarrelsome that I caused them both to be arrested and locked up. The following morning I visited Prisani. He had given the name of Alberto Guido, but I addressed him as Prisani, whereupon he seemed surprised and alarmed.

"What is your object in concealing your identity?" I asked. He affected not to understand me, so I said, "Your name is not Guido, but Prisani. What, then, is your reason for calling yourself Guido?"

"That is my business," he returned sulkily.

"And mine, too," I said. "You have a reason, and I will find it out. Before last night, when did you see Sarah Sutherland last?"

"I never saw her before," he mumbled.

"You know that to be false. You have known her a long time, and you know that her late husband was jealous of you, and for an assault upon you in Lincoln he was imprisoned."

The Italian grew pale at these words, and a dangerous light shone from his eyes. He clenched his fists, and between closed teeth he hissed—

"Yes, curse him!" Then after a pause he added, "I'm glad he is dead."

"No doubt, and I believe you are in a position to reveal how and by whose hand he met his death."

"How should I know?" he screamed, and by his whole manner betrayed the anxiety and fear he felt.

I now felt pretty certain that Prisani was the murderer, and I felt that I was warranted in having him arrested on suspicion of being the man who was wanted. Of course, Sarah was discharged, and when she heard that her lover was detained she was furious, and she uttered dark threats against me; but, undeterred, I set to work to try and get evidence against

the prisoner, who now preserved a sullen demeanour, and refused to answer any questions. He was removed to Edinburgh, and every possible means were taken to get proof of his having been in Edinburgh on the night of the crime. But in this we failed. He engaged a well-known counsel to defend him, and a number of Italians were brought from London to establish an *alibi*.

They swore that for a full week before the murder, and for at least a week after, the prisoner was in London, and as no rebutting evidence was forthcoming, Prisani was in due course discharged. But though he could not be legally convicted, I had not a shadow of doubt in my own mind that he was the criminal. Immediately after his release, Sarah Sutherland, who had remained in Edinburgh, joined him, and the two journeyed south, and I ceased to concern myself about them. Thus the mystery of Bill Sutherland's murder was never solved, and remains a mystery to the present day.

THE SHADOW ON THE BLIND.

A good many years ago there stood on the highroad between London and Edmonton an old-fashioned, ivy-covered detached house, known as "Willow End." How it got its name it is difficult to say, but it had been known as Willow End from time immemorial. It was a strange old place, very irregular and rambling in its architecture; with quaint chimney stacks and overhanging gables. It was within a mile of Edmonton, and stood back from the road about a dozen yards. It was surrounded with grounds, the front garden being planted with shrubbery. Behind was an extensive kitchen garden and a long orchard. And abutting on the kitchen garden, but with entrance from a side lane, was a small cottage, which belonged to the owner of the house, but which was occupied by a labourer and his wife—John and Anna Martin. This fact has a very important bearing on what follows.

It is a somewhat remarkable thing that at the beginning of the present century—I think it was in 1805 or 1806—Willow End was the scene of a dreadful murder, a man having butchered his wife with extraordinary brutality. For many years after that the place remained without a tenant. Then it got into Chancery, and finally passed into the possession of a widow who spent some money in putting the property into thorough repair, and at last it was let on a long lease to a gentleman named Herbert Pritchard. He

was a married man, with a family of two daughters. He was then about fifty, and his wife was considerably younger. She was a handsome woman, and it soon began to be whispered that she and her husband did not get on as well as they might have done. One day the rumour ran that she had eloped, and the rumour proved only too true. From that time Mr. Pritchard seemed to entirely change, and he had the appearance of a soured, disappointed man. A couple of years later one of his daughters died, and the remaining daughter married a year afterwards against his wishes. From that moment he seemed to shut himself off from the world, living a secluded, lonely life. He fell ill, however, one day, and an old woman who lived at Edmonton, and who had been in the habit of supplying him with butter and eggs, two things he was very fond of, went to nurse him, and subsequently she entered into his service as housekeeper. Her name was Margaret Horsfall, but she had been familiarly referred to for many years as "Old Peggy, the egg woman." From all that could be gathered, Peggy seemed to fall in with her master's views and wishes to a nicety, and she became as silent and reserved as he. The only thing that Mr. Pritchard appeared to take any interest in was his garden. He spent much time in it, and worked a great deal at it, being assisted occasionally by John Martin, who lived in the cottage I have spoken of as abutting on the garden. John was a big, powerful fellow, who could work well enough when he liked, but he gave way to occasional drinking bouts, and as a consequence was never in steady employment, and always in difficulties. He made himself useful, however, to Mr. Pritchard, who seemed interested in him, and allowed him to have a good deal of the produce that

was raised in the garden. Martin's wife was also employed by Mr. Pritchard to do the laundry work of the house; but with the exception of these people and his housekeeper, he held no communication with any one.

Mr. Pritchard had the reputation of being rich. It was a common belief in the neighbourhood that he kept a hoard of money in the house, and fears were sometimes expressed that his place would be robbed, for it stood in a very lonely situation, and the knowledge that its sole occupants were an old man and woman was considered likely to attempt some enterprising housebreaker to try his luck. However, years passed and nothing happened. Mr. Pritchard and his housekeeper Peggy became more feeble and were seen less. Pritchard ceased to take an active interest in his garden, and it was left almost entirely to the control of John Martin.

One Christmas Eve Peggy went into Edmonton to make some purchases, and pay sundry accounts. It was a fine, crisp, starlight night, and intensely cold. Old Peggy, not being as active as she was wont to be, did not get through with her business as quickly as she might have done, and it was half-past ten before she got back to Willow End. She had had a lift out from Edmonton in a butcher's cart. The butcher's boy, being well acquainted with her, offered to give her a seat, as he was going past the house, and she gladly availed herself of this. She let herself into the house with a latchkey, and when she entered she was surprised to find that a door at the end of the passage, which gave access to the back garden, was standing wide open. Although this was rather an unusual thing, she thought the master had gone out for a few minutes, and so she went to the kitchen to relieve herself of some parcels

she carried. Ten minutes later she passed through the passage again, and was surprised to find the door was still open, and, according to her own story, she went to the threshold and called out—

"Master, master, where are you?"

There was no response, however. Everything was very silent, and the night was solemn and grand. For the first time then she felt alarm, and turning back into the house, she called again, but still there was no response. So she hurried to the sitting-room, where he was in the habit of smoking a pipe at night, and there a dreadful sight met her gaze. He was lying on the floor, close to the door. A pool of blood was about him, and his head had evidently been smashed in with the poker, which lay a yard or two away. The poor woman was almost overcome with horror and fright, and she rushed from the house screaming. Just then it so happened that the butcher's cart in which she had ridden from Edmonton was on its way back. The boy in charge of the cart being informed of the state of matters in a few hurried words, went into the house to satisfy himself, and then having seen Peggy to the cottage of Mrs. Martin, he drove off as hard as he could to give information to the police, and three or four men accompanied by a doctor at once proceeded to Willow End. Mr. Pritchard was then quite dead. His head had been cruelly battered in with the poker, but there was evidence of there having been a struggle, and he had fought hard for his life. Two of his fingers were broken, as though they had been struck with the poker, and his arms and shoulders were shockingly bruised; the forearm of both arms, from the wrists to the elbows, was a mass of cuts and gashes, as though he put his arms up to protect his head from the murderous assault

of his assailant. From ransacked drawers and boxes, and from money being found scattered about the floor, it was clear that robbery had been the motive of the crime.

No time was lost by the police in trying to get some clue to the murderer, but as not a trace had been got by the day after Christmas Day, I was sent for and requested to take the matter up.

On going down to the scene of the crime I found the neighbourhood very excited, and people said that a curse had rested on the house ever since the first crime at the beginning of the century. It certainly seemed to me, as I learnt his story, that Mr. Pritchard had been pursued with ill-luck during his tenancy of the place, and now he, in his turn, had fallen a victim to an assassin. There was a generally expressed opinion that the criminal was a tramp, who had been loafing about Edmonton for some days, and had then disappeared. I traced this man to London and arrested him, but he brought forward the most unmistakable evidence that he was in London on Christmas Eve and the whole of the day.

A careful examination of Willow End led me to the opinion that the murderer had effected an entrance by a scullery window, and had then made his exit by the passage door, which in his excitement he neglected to close. There were marks of blood all along the passage, and also on the door, thereby clearly proving that he had gone out that way. Old Peggy's story I confirmed in every particular, and then I turned my attention to Mrs. Martin, who had been at home all the Christmas Eve. I found that she was very excited about the crime, and when I asked her if she had heard anybody moving about on Christmas Eve, she said she had not;

but she had seen something which had terrified her, and the story she told I give in her own words.

"My man had been drinking for two or three days, and on the day afore Christmas he went off in the afternoon about two o'clock to London to see a brother-in-law to try and borrow a sovereign. He promised me on his oath he would be back by eight o'clock, and bring some beef and other things for our Christmas dinner. He didn't turn up at eight o'clock, and at half-past eight I began to get kind o' uneasy, and I kept a-going to the gate to see if he was a-coming, and I went in and out up to half-past nine. Then looking towards Mr. Pritchard's house I seed something that made me feel all of a shake like. I had a full view of Mr. Pritchard's sitting-room from my little garden. The white blind was drawn down at the window, and I had seen the light there all the evening. Suddenly two shadders appeared on the blind, and it seemed to me like two men a-fighting, and one had what seemed like a stick in his hand, and he was a-striking of the other. The one as was a-being struck was Mr. Pritchard, because I recognized his bald head. But the other man had a great lot of hair about his head, and a beard. I felt like as if I was a-going to faint, for I saw the big man with the beard lift up the stick and hit the other man on the head, and he fell down. I felt sure something dreadful was a-happening, and I ran down the lane to my neighbour, Mrs. Schofield, but she and her husband were out, and the house was shut up. I went to Mrs. Roberts', who lives across the field there about half a mile off, but she was out too, and there was only her little girl Edith in, who was a-minding of the baby, and she said her mother had gone to Edmonton to buy the Christmas dinner. Soon after I got back to my own

place I heard old Peggy a-screaming, and when they brought her here and told me about the murder I was took that badly that I had to go to my bed."

"Your husband had not returned then?"

"No, he did not come back till late on Christmas night. He'd been a-drinking heavily, and has been in bed ever since."

The importance of Mrs. Martin's evidence will be manifest, inasmuch as she was able to describe the murderer as having a beard and a great lot of hair about his head. Mr. Pritchard was in the habit of using a reading-lamp which stood on a table against the wall immediately opposite the window. And I found by actual experiment that a figure passing between the light and the window would be silhouetted on the blind, and a portrait in outline would thus be seen by any one standing where Mrs. Martin had stood. I also found that it was quite easy to distinguish the figure of any one with whom you were familiar on their passing slowly between the light and the blind. This led me to question the woman closely as to whether the shadow on the blind of the man with the beard did not suggest some one she might have seen before. But she was persistent in declaring that it did not.

My idea in so questioning her was that the criminal might have been one of the loafers about the neighbourhood who was well acquainted with old Mr. Pritchard's habits, and was fully aware that he was alone on that night, and that Mrs. Martin might be familiar enough with him to have recognized his shadow on the blind. However, she averred that she had not the faintest idea who it was; and so with that very misty clue of a man with a beard and a shock

head of hair, I set to work to try and unravel the mystery and bring the slayer of poor Mr. Pritchard to justice.

The more I investigated the affair, the more I became convinced that the criminal was no stranger either to the place or to Mr. Pritchard's habits. One thing that led me to this conclusion was the following fact. In the room where the crime was committed was a cupboard that extended from the floor to the ceiling. On the lower shelves of this cupboard were books, magazines, and newspapers; but on the top shelf there were some broken ornaments stowed away, and old Peggy stated that on that shelf Mr. Pritchard always kept a cigar-box, in which he put money, and sometimes he had a considerable sum there. On the night of the murder he took the box down in order to give his housekeeper a five-pound note out of it for her marketing, and Peggy avowed that there were several notes and some gold left in the box, and she saw him put the box back. Before the shelf could be reached it was necessary to stand on a chair, and when the police arrived they found a chair standing there, and the empty cigar-box was on the floor. Now, it was clear from this that the criminal was fully acquainted with his victim's peculiarity of keeping money in a cigar-box, which stood on the top shelf of the sitting-room cupboard. It was opposed to common sense to suppose that an utter stranger would have alighted on that box by mere chance. On opening the cupboard doors he would have seen nothing but books, and by stepping back a little he would have got a view of some broken china ornaments which were stowed away on the top shelf. But even assuming he had got a glimpse of the cigar-box, what could have led him to

the knowledge that it contained money? There was the possibility that he might have thought it contained cigars, and had got up to examine it; but it appeared to me such a far-fetched theory, that a man who had just committed a most brutal murder and was reeking with the blood of his victim would have thought only of cigars, that I dismissed it as untenable. No; I was intuitively certain that whoever the man with the beard and shock head of hair was, he was well acquainted with Mr. Pritchard and his habits, and so was able to go direct to the cupboard and reach down the box. That there had been a struggle between the murderer and his victim was perfectly evident from the way the furniture was overturned and scattered about; so that it was clear Mr. Pritchard had tried to defend himself, and it was probable he had in his dying agony endeavoured to keep his assailant from the cupboard.

Of course I did not close my eyes to the possibility that old Peggy might have been an accessory to the crime, but I could not discover the shadow of a shade of anything that would have justified suspicion being harboured against her. In fact, she was so prostrated with grief and the shock she had suffered, that she was dangerously ill, and her life was despaired of. The condition she was in, therefore, prevented my questioning her; but every one agreed that she was very greatly attached to her master, and had been a most faithful and devoted servant to him.

So far, then, and up to this point, we had no clue to the murderer, beyond the vague one that he had a shock head of hair and beard. That was a description that would have applied to thousands of men; therefore, *per se*, it was not of much value in an ordinary sense.

Both the local and London police were strongly of opinion that the crime had been committed by some passing vagrant, who had discovered by chance that old Mr. Pritchard was alone; and acting on this idea, numerous arrests were made of homeless vagabonds, but with no other result than that the fellows had to be discharged again. Let me say at once that I did not share the opinion of the police. My view was that the murderer would be found nearer the scene of the crime, and I endeavoured to learn something of the movements of the doubtful characters who dwelt in Edmonton and its neighbourhood. But there was no one I could select as being the probable criminal, and fears were expressed that the crime would have to be numbered amongst the long list of unrecorded ones which have from time to time been perpetrated in London and its neighbourhood. I must confess, however, that I did not think so myself. Whether this arose from an over-sanguine disposition or not, I cannot say. My own impression was indeed, that I had an instinctive feeling I should run the criminal down, though I confess that at the moment there was nothing to encourage hope, and every day that passed served to favour the fellow's chances of escape.

A fortnight passed, when one day I went down to Mrs. Martin's cottage, as I wanted to put one or two questions to her. As I approached, her husband was standing at the little wicket gate that led into the tiny garden, smoking a pipe. It was the first time I had seen him, and I was struck, even startled, by his appearance. He looked wretchedly ill and haggard, and his face was as unprepossessing a one as I had seen for a long time. He was a big, hulking fellow, with round shoulders and a bull-like neck. His whole

appearance was suggestive of the lazy sot who preferred the public-house to honest labour. But it was not these things that startled me. It was his shock head of hair and beard, which so far answered the meagre description we had been able to get of the murderer as he was shadowed on the blind. Then it flashed across my mind that this fellow might be the very man I had been anxiously searching for. I kept my thoughts, however, to myself, but entering into conversation with him, I found that he was of a sullen, morose disposition, with restless, cunning-looking eyes.

The more I talked to him, the more the idea grew upon me that he might be the murderer, and I resolved to ascertain what his movements were on Christmas Eve; and I began this by putting a few preliminary questions to him, though I endeavoured to so frame them as not to arouse his fears, if he really was the criminal.

"You were away on Christmas Eve?" I observed casually.

"Yes," he answered brusquely.

"It's a pity; for had you been here you might have got some trace of the murderer," I remarked.

"I might and I might not," was his answer.

"Were you with friends on the night of the crime?"

"Well, the fact is, I was on the spurt."

"In Edmonton?"

"No. In London."

"What part of London were you in?"

He looked at me savagely as I asked this question, and growled—

"Well, governor, I don't know as it's your business to question me like that."

"Perhaps you don't know," I said; "but still, if you have nothing to conceal, you will tell me exactly where you were on Christmas Eve."

He fairly glared at me now, and said savagely—

"Do you think it was me as done the job?"

"John Martin," I answered sternly, "the shadow of the man who committed the murder was thrown upon the window-blind as he struggled with his victim between the light and the blind. That shadow revealed a man with a shock head of hair and a beard; and though I may be wrong, I have no hesitation in saying I suspect you, for you were well acquainted with Mr. Pritchard, knew where he kept his money, and was the most likely person to be aware of the fact that he was alone on Christmas Eve."

He turned deathly pale as I spoke, and the short clay pipe he was smoking fell to the ground and was broken on the gravel.

"I tell you I was in London on that night," he growled between his set teeth.

"Possibly you were," I said, "but I shall arrest you and give you the chance of proving your statement."

He glanced nervously round as though contemplating flight, but before he could recover his presence of mind I had whipped the handcuffs on him. And then he stood like one who was dumfoundered and paralysed. His wife came running out, but it did not strike me that she was much surprised when she realized the situation; though she exclaimed with pathetic earnestness—

"Oh, Jack, God in heaven grant that you bain't the murderer of poor old Pritchard, who was so good to us!"

He made no reply, but burst into tears; and somehow I could not help thinking that I had laid the

criminal by the heels at last. He offered no opposition to going with me, and I duly lodged him in Brentford Gaol. As the magisterial inquiry proceeded, it became pretty evident that we had got hold of the right man; and by questioning his wife, I learnt that the suit of clothes he had worn when he went away the day before Christmas she had not seen since, and that to her surprise he came home with a suit of new moleskin. Link by link a chain of circumstantial evidence was woven around him, and he could not bring forward the slightest proof that he was in London on Christmas Eve. In due course he was committed to the Sessions for trial, and, after a long and patient investigation, the jury returned a verdict of guilty against him, and he was sentenced to death. He persisted in asserting his innocence, and there were plenty of fussy people who professed to believe him, with the result that the papers were flooded with letters. But, unfortunately for these sentimentalists, the day before his execution the condemned man made a full confession of his guilt. According to this confession, he deliberately planned the murder some time beforehand, even to the purchasing of a new suit of moleskin, which he hid in a disused stable belonging to Mr. Pritchard. He knew that old Peggy was going to Brentford on the night of the crime, and he hung about until he saw her depart. Soon afterwards he obtained an entrance by the scullery window, and crept into the room where Mr. Pritchard was reading, for he knew that the unfortunate gentleman kept a considerable sum of money in the cigar-box in the cupboard, and he resolved to have it. He tried to strangle his victim, but he struggled so desperately that he silenced him at last with the poker. Having secured the money, he

hid it in old drain in the stable, and, putting on the new suit of clothes, he stowed the old one away in the hay-loft. His intention was, as soon as the excitement had died down, to secure the money, of which there was over a hundred pounds, and go out to America. He considered that the whole tragic drama had been so admirably plotted and worked out that suspicion would never fall upon him. Nor would it have done so in all probability, had it not been for that fatal shadow on the blind.

THE HANGMAN'S PREY.

The title I have chosen to indicate this sketch may seem to savour too much of the sensational; but it occurs to me that it is singularly *à propos* to the story I have to tell, which illustrates in a very painful manner certain peculiar phases of human nature that are well calculated to set the student pondering. There are very many complex problems in connection with our poor selves that may well puzzle us, and cause us at times to bow down and cry, How comes it that such things can be?

I propose to tell here a plain, unvarnished tale of the career of a young man, which, beginning in brightness and joy, closed in darkness and shame. The only fiction in the whole narrative is the names, which, for the sake of the members of the family still living, I have used in place of the real ones.

The scene opens in a charming little village in the West of England—one of those restful arcadian villages where it seems to outsiders as if naught but primitive innocence exists, and wickedness can find no abiding place. But, alas! wherever man dwelleth there also dwelleth sin, for the inclination for evil-doing is inherent in the human heart. I will call this village Rosedell; a by no means inappropriate name, for roses flourished there amazingly, and there was hardly a house or cottage in the whole place that was not in the season a perfect picture with the roses that climbed to

the very roof. The village was enclosed by a low range of hills, which rendered the climate mild and genial. The nearest railway station was two and a half miles away, and the nearest town four miles. The inhabitants of Rosedell were to a man almost agriculturists. There were, of course, a few exceptions. The rector, for instance, the humble shopkeepers, and the solicitor; but even these people were interested in the cultivation of the land or the cultivation of something; and there was not a person from the rector downwards but could judge a cow, a sheep, a horse, or a hog by their points, and the one prevailing subject of conversation was the crops, the weather, and how the orchards were looking, for Rosedell had quite a reputation for its fruit.

The lawyer was Sydney Chernside, Esq., who had succeeded his grandfather and father in the business, and for three generations the family had managed to thrive and fatten on the innate litigiousness of their fellows, their practice not being confined to the village, but extending for many miles around, for they had earned the reputation of being "a highly respectable firm of country lawyers." Sydney Chernside, who succeeded to a very comfortable inheritance when his father shuffled off the mortal coil, was a steady-going, methodical young man, who prided himself on his respectability, and was on a footing of intimacy with most of the county families. In due course he married the Squire's youngest daughter, who, being exceedingly pretty, had been regarded as somewhat of a heartless flirt; and certain of the village croakers had predicted that "she be that flighty she be, that she bain't a-going to do much good for hersen." Therefore much surprise was expressed when it became known that she was to marry the staid-going and decidedly

domesticated Mr. Sydney Chernside. As is often the case, however, the village flirt settled down into a very devoted and attentive wife, and in due course she presented her husband with a son, who first saw the light on a brilliant June morning, when all the air of Rosedell was heavy with the fragrance of flowers and drowsy with the hum of bees. The bells of the old ivy-covered church were set ringing to announce the event, and on the happy mother and father poured in congratulations from all sides. Other children came in due course to bless the union, as people say, forgetting that not unfrequently children prove a curse instead of a blessing. There was a second son born, but he died a few months later. The rest of the family consisted of four girls.

When Mr. Chernside had been married but seven years he met with an accident that proved fatal. He was thrown out of his gig one night when driving home from the railway station. He alighted on his head, concussion of the brain ensued, and he died in twelve hours, without recovering consciousness. The young widow was thus left with a numerous family to bring up, the youngest an infant, the eldest just six years old. It was necessary to abandon the business, which was taken over by a firm of lawyers in practice in the county town. But Mrs. Chernside was left fairly well off, and as she had expectations of something handsome when her father died, she was regarded as "a good catch" for some one, in spite of the family, and eighteen months after her husband's death the somebody came along in the person of one Henry Arkwright, who was a widower without children. He had been in business in the town as a carriage builder, and had retired with a comfortable income; but he bore the character of being

unsteady, and too fond of convivial society. It soon became evident that he took no interest in his stepchildren, who were entirely dependent on their mother for their bringing up.

Her only son, John Henry Chernside, was her idol, and everybody said that she was not only spoiling him, but ruining him. Certainly, as he grew in years he became a wild, intractable lad, who was regarded by the whole village with something that amounted almost to positive aversion. And it was also an open secret that his stepfather detested him. But Mrs. Arkwright, with a mother's fondness and infatuation, was blind to the boy's faults, and considered that every one was stupidly prejudiced against him, and he became a source of constant friction between herself and her husband. So notorious did he make himself, that more than one ancient beldame of the village predicted that he would come to a bad end.

Up to the time that he was about fourteen he was educated at home. Then he had become so wayward by being petted and indulged by his mother that he was sent to a public school near London, which was noted for its strict discipline. To what extent the discipline benefited him it is difficult to say. But in the process of time he went to college; it being his mother's wish that he should ultimately study law and become a barrister, and she dreamed of the day when he would be a judge of high renown. Unhappily for her dreams, however, young Chernside had a taint in his nature which was destined to blast his career and poison his life.

His career at college was, to put it in a mild form, shameful, and it ended in his being expelled. For some time before this he had endeavoured to pay his addresses to Mary, the daughter of the Rev. Joseph

Woolley, Rector of Rosedell. But, as was only natural, her parents forbade her holding any communication with him. They said that if ultimately he showed signs of improvement they might consent to the courtship, if they deemed it to their child's happiness, but in the meantime they commanded her to shun him. How she respected that command will presently be seen.

As Mr. Arkwright refused to recognize his stepson, or be reconciled to him in any way, he told his wife he would leave her if she insisted on having the boy home. In spite of this threat, however, which no doubt would have been carried out, she would have taken her erring son to her maternal bosom, for she still believed that he was cruelly sinned against, and that if he was a sinner himself he was an innocent one. But he unquestionably saved her some trouble for the time being by taking himself off to sea. He continued absent for a period of nearly four years, and this part of his career remains obscure. But what is clear is that he suffered a term of imprisonment at the Cape of Good Hope for violently assaulting a shipmate. He returned home at last, and his mother welcomed him with open arms, for her second husband had been dead a twelvemonth. John Henry did not remain at home very long, but long enough to renew his acquaintance with pretty Mary Woolley, with whom, as was subsequently proved, he had kept up a correspondence. Her father, discovering that she was still under the fascination of young Chernside, sent her to the Isle of Man, to an uncle, who was charged to keep a strict watch over her. Then John Henry went off and enlisted in a cavalry regiment, and accompanied his regiment to India. Soon after his arrival he was flogged for some gross breach of military discipline, for which no

extenuating circumstances could be found. During the passage out from England he had shown such a mutinous and refractory spirit that he had been confined in a cell the greater part of the time, and it was determined that he should be taught obedience, if that were possible. Although the flogging seemed to have curbed him for a time, and he became more amenable to reason, he took an early opportunity of deserting, and what he did during the ensuing two or three years is not known, and never will be known now. By that time Mary Woolley had grown into a really handsome young woman, but had developed a perversity and waywardness of disposition that was well calculated to cause her parents grave anxiety. In spite of the careful way in which she had been nurtured and trained, she showed a disregard for her father's and mother's wishes until the matter became a village scandal, and at length she suddenly disappeared, and no one could tell whither she had gone. It was a terrible blow to those who loved her, and the sympathy of the entire village was with them. For a time wounded pride and a sense of shame almost bowed them into the dust; but they rose at last, and, hiding their wounded hearts from the world, they resolved that their erring daughter's name should henceforth be as a dead letter to them. Mrs. Arkwright had at this period removed and gone to live at Plymouth, and all her connections with Rosedell were severed, and her scapegrace son ceased to be remembered; for Rosedell, small as it was, had its own affairs to attend to, and the world could not stand still because John Henry Chernside had turned out a vagabond, and disgraced the long-honoured name; and Mary Woolley, the rector's favourite daughter, had run away from her home. Although there was no direct evidence

of it, people shrewdly suspected that she had been induced to leave her home by the machinations of John Henry.

Ten years passed, and brought many changes to the sweet village of Rosedell. The good rector died, and it is recorded that on his deathbed his one prayer was to see his erring daughter again. But the prayer was not granted. He was borne to his last resting-place under the old yews in the churchyard, where he had so often walked and meditated. Then his family removed, his place was taken by a new rector, and Rosedell ceased to mourn. Many of the old villagers had also passed away. A new generation had sprung up, and amongst them the story of wicked John Henry Chernside and pretty but weak Mary Woolley, the rector's daughter, was but as a dim tradition.

The scene shifts now to a squalid quarter of Hackney, London. In a dismal, gloomy-looking house, situated in a dismal gloomy-looking street, a man and woman—supposed to be man and wife—occupy two rooms. They are known as Mr. and Mrs. John Shadwell. They are both given to drink, the woman being even worse than the man, although there is little to choose between them. He earns a very precarious living by copying for a firm of city lawyers, but his miserable wages are mainly spent in drink, and between him and his wife there is incessant wrangling. He brutally ill-uses her, and frequently she is covered with bruises, her eyes blackened, her face cut. This sort of thing, however, is part and parcel of the every-day life of the neighbourhood. In the great and Christian city of London, with its teeming wealth and grandeur, there are slums and by-ways inhabited by human beings so degraded, so brutalized, that we may well ask whether we are any

more civilized in this the nineteenth century than were our ancestors who flourished in the mediæval ages.

One night—it was a Saturday night—Mr. and Mrs. Shadwell were heard to be quarrelling fiercely. Occasionally the woman shrieked, but the man's oaths resounded above her cries. None of the other occupants of the hovel, however, thought of interfering. Quarrels, oaths, and shrieks were peculiar to the neighbourhood, and familiarity breeds contempt. At length a heavy thud was heard on the Shadwells' floor, and an old bed-ridden man, who was in the room beneath, remarked that—

"Shadwell is a-bashing his wife about again, and if somebody doesn't go up, there'll be murder done." Nobody deemed it his business, however, to go up, and at length the night grew silent, and slowly passed away into the great abyss of time. The Sabbath dawned on London, and the bells called people to worship God, and from many a pulpit was preached the beautiful doctrine that Christ died to save sinners. When noon had come and gone, an old woman, a fellow-lodger in the house occupied by Shadwell and his wife, out of the charity of her heart, took a cup of tea up to the Shadwells' room, intending it for Mrs. Shadwell. She knocked at the door, but got no answer; then knocked again and again, but still no answer; nor would she ever have got one unless the dead could speak. So at last she opened the door and went in. Then she let the cup of tea fall from her hand to the floor, and she fled, shrieking "Murder." And murder it was, for poor Mrs. Shadwell had been battered and hacked to pieces with a poker and bottle, and she was lying there, a ghastly and pitiable sight, beyond all human aid, and freed from the burden and pain of life. And, since Christ died for

sinners, might not one charitably hope that this poor creature who had been so foully done to death was met at the gates of Paradise by pitying angels who wept her sins away?

But where was her murderer?—for murdered she had been beyond the shadow of a doubt. And the murderer—was it not equally certain?—was her husband. Otherwise, why had he fled? The hue and cry was raised, and the hunt begun. It became my painful duty to have to track him down. He had got a good start, and had he been possessed of means he might have got clear off. But I learnt that he was penniless, and a penniless and starving fugitive has little hope and chance even in wealthy Babylon. But many days passed, and he was still uncaptured. All London was ringing with the crime. Even the pampered West took a languid interest in it, owing to the fugitive being still at large, and because it had leaked out that the murdered woman had been well connected, and was, in truth, the daughter of a clergyman in the West of England. She was, indeed, the once pretty and gently nurtured Mary Woolley, whose father had been rector of Rosedell. So much did we find out by some old letters that had been treasured in a battered box kept in the room. And those letters, so full of good counsel and breathing motherly love, were very painful reading in connection with the dark tragedy.

At length I heard of a hunted, dirty, starved-looking man trying to obtain a berth in a ship that was on the point of sailing from the East India Docks for India. He was not accepted, for his looks were against him, and I was led to believe from the description that this man was the murderer. I succeeded at last in getting on his track, and brought him to bay in a foul spot away down the

river, where in a wide stretch of greasy ooze and reeking mud, great baulks of shining timber rotted, apparently ownerless. Here for over two hours, and with a desperateness of a hunted animal, he struggled for his life, for he knew that he had become the hangman's prey, and that once the fatal irons had engirdled his wrists all hope would have gone. And even in this degraded, abandoned, crime-stained creature the love of life was strong, so that he strove with the energy of wild despair to preserve it. What prompted him to do so, save it was a craven fear of death, is a mystery. But the fear of death is very powerful, even in a wretch who has suddenly and ruthlessly battered the life out of his partner. It was not likely, however, that Shadwell could escape now unless he did so by drowning himself in one of the foul creeks, where the black shiny water emitted mephitic gases, and a speedy death might have been found. But he was too great a coward for that, and at length he fell into my hands, and from that moment his worthless life was practically over. Never shall I forget the expression of agony that swept over his face as he found himself my prisoner. I soon saw and gathered from his mode of speaking and general bearing that he had received a good education, and I began to feel a deep and painful interest in him.

As soon as he was conveyed to the police-station he abandoned himself to pitiable despair, and in the torture of his mind he frequently moaned out, "Why did I do it? why did I do it? She maddened me, and yet I loved her."

His guilt was too clear to permit of the slightest doubt being entertained, and the long course of brutality he had practised towards the unfortunate woman shut him off from any sympathy. He was duly committed

for trial on a charge of wilful murder. And when it was known down in Rosedell and the West that Mary Woolley—who had never been his wife—was the victim, people there began to think that Shadwell could be no other than the son of the once prosperous lawyer, Sydney Chernside. And so it proved to be. By the time he was brought up for trial, I had gathered the details of his career as I have given them in the foregoing part of this narrative. The trial did not last long. The only defence that could possibly be set up was that the wretched man had absolutely lost his reason through drink; and his wild and erratic career was cited as evidence that he was mentally weak, and a victim to an uncontrollable temper. But this argument carried no weight, and he was cast for death by the unanimous verdict of the jury, while the able judge who tried him animadverted in very strong terms indeed on the culprit's brutal conduct, and took occasion to remark that his whole life, as far as it was known, had been a shame and an outrage on God's handiwork.

The prisoner heard his sentence with a certain sullen composure, but it was painfully evident to those who were in attendance on him that he felt his position with the keenest of anguish.

A few days after his condemnation, a widow lady, broken down with grief, applied for an order to see him. It was his mother. But when he was asked if he would see her, he exclaimed—

"No. To my mother I owe my present position. All my degradation, all my shame and sorrow and sin are due to the stupid indulgence she showed to me when I was a boy. Had she kept a tight hand over me I might have been saved; but she was blind to my follies

and vices, and so they developed, and grew strong until they got beyond my own control."

Nothing could move him from the position he had taken up until his last day on earth, when the chaplain had so far worked upon his feelings, and softened his nature, that he consented to see his mother. It would be too harrowing to describe the painfulness of that interview. They had not met for years, and the mother love was still strong even for the degraded murderer. When the time came for the final parting on earth, the poor woman went into violent hysterics, and had to be removed by force.

When the condemned murderer first saw the light in his native village of Rosedell the village bells rang out a merry peal, but now, as he walked painfully, and with ghastly white and haggered face, to his shameful death on the public scaffold, the bell of St. Sepulchre tolled dismally. And as his eyes took in the last glimpse of earthly things, he caught sight of a surging mass of struggling beings, who hailed his presence with fierce cries, snatches of ribald songs, and coarse oaths. What his thoughts were in that supreme moment of unutterable anguish it is difficult to say; but if he remembered his misspent life, his utter disregard for honour and truth, the cruel way in which he led the weak and erring Mary Woolley astray, until he battered her crushed life out in a London den, he must have admitted to himself, as the hangman's rope encircled his neck, that his shameful doom was merited.

THE LAST SHOT.

Zimmermann & Goldstein were German merchants in London, and carried on a large wholesale business in Cannon Street. They occupied the entire block of one of the large warehouses that are to be found in that part of London, and they traded in all sorts of fancy goods, but the principal branch of their business was that of jewellery, watches, clocks, and precious stones. The house had been established a great many years, and bore a high reputation in the commercial world. It had originally been commenced in a small way by Mr. Zimmermann, but after a time he took a partner, who subsequently died, and Zimmermann continued the business, carrying it on for many years by himself; but as age crept upon him and incapacitated him from giving the attention to the concern that it required, he took Mr. Goldstein in as partner. That was about twelve months before the events occurred that I am now about to relate. Mr. Goldstein, who was a native of Frankfort, was a young man with a wife and child, a baby boy about a year old, and owing to the infirmities of the head of the firm, almost the entire management fell upon him, and occasionally he travelled abroad as buyer.

Amongst the firm's customers was a gentleman by the name of Brandenberg, who was a German by parentage, but had been born in England. He was a young man, and on coming of age he had succeeded to

considerable wealth, and spent a great deal of money with Zimmermann & Goldstein, buying from them watches, jewellery of all kinds, clocks, pictures, and things of a like nature. He was engaged to be married, and wishing to present his *fiancée* with a very handsome present, he commissioned Zimmermann & Goldstein to purchase for him a set of costly diamonds and a pearl necklace, and for that purpose Mr. Goldstein himself proceeded to Berlin, and placed the order with a renowned firm of merchants there.

In due course the articles arrived; they consisted of a magnificent spray of diamonds for the hair, of quite an original design, the stones being the very finest of their kind. In addition, there were a pair of ear-drops, a necklet, a brooch, and two finger-rings. Besides these, there was a pearl necklace, which was unique and a perfect marvel of beauty and richness. Each pearl was the size of a pea, and there were a hundred and twenty of these altogether in the necklace, which had originally belonged to a member of the Rothschild family, but had changed hands on the death of the proprietor, and at last come into the hands of the Berlin firm, who sold it to Zimmermann & Goldstein. The value set upon all these baubles was twenty-two thousand pounds, which Mr. Brandenberg agreed to pay for them, and by Goldstein's request he consented to allow the goods to remain on show at Zimmermann & Goldstein's warehouse, and by way of an advertisement for themselves, they inserted a notice in the papers that the public would be allowed to inspect the jewels during the month on the presentation of card. During the day the things were exposed in a massive glass case, and two commissionaires were appointed to keep watch and ward over them. But at night they

were secured with other valuable property in the strong room, which was a chamber about twelve feet by ten, of the most massive construction, and was said to be both fire and burglar proof. There was only one door to it, and that was a solid piece of iron plate, four inches in thickness, and it was secured when closed by means of a series of tumbler locks, which seemed strong enough to defy any attempts that might be made to force them. In spite of all these precautions, and in spite of strong room and iron bars, the jewels were stolen.

Christmas Day that year fell on a Saturday, and, in accordance with a very generally expressed desire, most of the big city firms consented to suspend business from the hour of closing on Friday night until Tuesday morning, thus giving three clear days' holiday to the *employés;* and in order to afford the immense number of city toilers, who would thus be released for these three days, facilities for going away, the various railway companies offered unusual opportunities for proceeding to all parts of England and the Continent. Now, some time between that Friday night and the Tuesday morning Zimmermann & Goldstein's warehouse was entered, the strong room forced, and the jewellery stolen.

As soon as the loss was discovered, there was great excitement in the warehouse. Mr. Goldstein had not arrived at the time, as he seldom reached the warehouse before ten o'clock, his place of residence being at Dorking. Mr. Zimmermann was sojourning in the Isle of Wight for the benefit of his health, and had not been to the warehouse for more than a fortnight.

As soon as Goldstein arrived, word was sent to the "Yard," and owing to the serious nature of the

robbery I received instructions to proceed at once to the premises and make an investigation.

I found Mr. Goldstein in great distress, and he expressed a hope that I would make a determined effort to recover the stolen property. Of course I promised to do what I could, and having received all the particulars as I have given them in the foregoing, I set to work to make a minute examination of the premises.

At the back of the warehouse was a small sort of yard, with entrance through an archway that was secured with a pair of iron gates. This yard was used by carters delivering and receiving goods. Several windows looked into the yard, and one of them, notwithstanding it was protected by iron bars, had been forced, and an entrance effected by that means. I found that the iron rods which protected the windows had been wrenched and twisted out of place by aid of a powerful lever, probably a crowbar. I should mention that the gate giving entrance to the yard had been opened with a duplicate key, and the door of the strong room had been burst open with steel wedges and crowbars, and a formidable crowbar had been found lying near the door.

I spent a good deal of time in inspecting the place, and in a critical examination of the forced door of the strong room. That examination led me to a totally different conclusion to what the apparent injuries seemed to warrant; what the conclusion was I will presently mention. One thing was very evident, and that was that the robbery had been deliberately planned and carried out. The thieves had had three days and three nights for their work—that is, counting up to Tuesday morning, about eighty hours. But it

seemed self-evident that the job had been done between Friday night and Saturday, and the thieves had probably—as Mr. Goldstein suggested—availed themselves of the facilities offered by the railway companies for reaching the Continent, and so had got clear off. I had to admit the feasibility of this, and urgent telegrams were despatched to the police bureaux of the chief Continental centres.

As was my invariable custom in such cases as these, I made careful inquiries about the people employed in the business, but I could learn nothing that justified suspicion of any particular person. Yet I was convinced of one thing, and that was that the thieves must have been very well acquainted with the place, and were aware of the arrangements for securing the jewels. I came to this conclusion almost from the very first, and had an idea that somebody connected with the warehouse, or who had been connected with it, could, if he would open his mouth, tell a tale. When I suggested this to Goldstein, he pooh-poohed, and pointed out that during the time the jewels had been on view, hundreds of people had availed themselves of the invitation, and so opportunity had been afforded the thieves to make themselves acquainted with the premises.

Of course, there was a certain amount of feasibility in this, but it did not fit in with my theory; especially when I learnt that the utmost precautions had always been taken to guard the jewels during the day, and to see that nobody was left on the premises during the night. My theory, then, was that the robbery had been planned and carried out by some person who was very well acquainted with the warehouse. And I made every inquiry with a view to eliciting if any one had recently been discharged. No one had, however,

and those in the service, even down to the boys, had been with the firm for a considerable time. It was somewhat remarkable that in my efforts to unravel the mystery I was not seconded by Mr. Goldstein. That gentleman, in fact, seemed to have made up his mind to afford me no information if he could possibly help it; and he displayed an altogether remarkable irritability with me that nothing I could think of seemed to warrant. This annoyed me a little, and I asked him one day how it was that he exhibited such a disinclination to help me in my investigations, whereupon he got so angry that I began to think he was not quite responsible for his actions, and he answered—

"The reason is that you are fooling your time away about the premises instead of looking for the thief farther afield. You don't suppose he would be such an idiot as to remain on the premises when he had got possession of twenty thousand pounds' worth of property? While you are humbugging here he is making good his escape to some far-off land, where, clever as you think yourself, you will be unable to touch him."

Looking Mr. Goldstein full in the face, I said, "That is your theory, sir. It is not mine, and if I am to continue in the case I shall follow my lights, and, unless I am very much mistaken, I shall ultimately unearth the thief, and what is more, in London, or not very far off."

Goldstein shrugged his shoulders, and sneered contemptuously as he replied—

"Like all the rest of you fellows, you are pigheaded; and that pigheadedness invariably leads you on the wrong scent. However, you can do as you like, but I shall take some other means and employ somebody else to track the thief."

I did not continue the discussion. It did not strike me that it was worth while to do so; but Goldstein's manner and words suggested quite a new theory to me, and that evening I went down to Epsom, where Mr. Zimmermann lived, and called upon him.

My object in going to Zimmermann was very definite, and I may as well at once say that I had come to believe that Goldstein had had a hand in the robbery. This may seem a startling statement; but his manner and protestations had aroused my suspicions.

It was the first time I had seen Zimmermann. He was an old man, very feeble and frail, and when I introduced myself he displayed great agitation.

"This is a serious business, Mr. Donovan," he said—"a very serious business indeed. It is serious from the mere money point of view; and it will also do us harm with our *clientèle*. However, we must bear with it, I suppose, but I am sorry you have not succeeded in capturing the thief. Had he been taken we might have recovered some portion of the stolen property, if not the whole of it."

"We might have done so, and may do so yet," I answered. "I have reason to think I am on the track of the rascal."

"I am glad to hear that. I hope you are not too sanguine," the old man remarked dolefully, and with a sigh, as though he had no hope that I should succeed. "Of course, Goldstein is rendering you every assistance," he added.

This gave me the very opportunity I wanted, and I seized it eagerly.

"By the way," I said, in answer, "I suppose you were well acquainted with Mr. Goldstein before he joined you in partnership?"

"No, I was not. I didn't know anything about him. But why do you ask?"

"Oh—well, for a mere satisfaction of my thoughts," I remarked, with a laugh, for I did not wish to give the old man a shock. But his suspicions were already aroused, and he said quickly—

"You have a deeper motive than that, Mr. Donovan. Pray speak out. Have no false delicacy in the matter."

"I do not intend to have any," I replied. "But let me put this question to you, Mr. Zimmermann. Would it seem to you within the bounds of possibility —I won't say probability—that Goldstein might know something about the way in which these jewels were stolen?"

The old man passed his thin hand over his scant grey hair, and he looked troubled and shocked.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "you don't mean to say you suspect Goldstein of being the thief?"

For the moment I hesitated as to the reply I should make to this. But a very little reflection convinced me it was better to throw off all reserve. Nothing was to be gained, as it seemed to me, by beating about the bush. Therefore I answered frankly—

"Yes, I do. Well, that is, I suspect he has had a hand in it."

Although Mr. Zimmermann tried to look composed, and to bear himself with dignity, it was painfully evident that he was terribly distressed.

"It is impossible!" he groaned; "and yet, and yet, no man is to be trusted. The human heart is full of wickedness. It may be that Goldstein has been tempted and has fallen; but I cannot bring myself to believe it."

"Of course there is the possibility that I am mistaken," I replied. "Therefore it will be wise for you not to mention to living soul a word of what I have said. My chief object in coming to you to-night is to discuss this affair, and ask you your opinion of your partner. I quite understand that the suspicions I have raised in your mind must be a great shock, and distress you terribly; but you see I must do my duty. And I have this to say: If I am wrong about Goldstein, then I haven't the faintest shadow of a trace of the thief."

Mr. Zimmermann covered his face with his hands as if to hide his agitation, and for some minutes he made no reply. But at last he said—

"It tears my very heart to have to say so, but I fear you may be right. During his connection with me, Mr. Goldstein's conduct has not always inspired me with confidence. And now I will tell you this—that about six months ago it came to my knowledge that he was in monetary difficulties. I felt that the reputation of my firm was at stake, and I talked to him, and elicited that he had been speculating rashly, and had lost heavily. To tide him over his difficulties I lent him a thousand pounds. He has not yet paid it back, and it occurs to me now as likely that, being in sore straits, he has been mad enough to try to restore his lost position by robbing me."

When I left Mr. Zimmermann, a little later after that very painful interview, I felt pretty sure that I had struck a trail, and I resolved to call at the warehouse the following morning and put a few questions to Goldstein that were calculated to lead him into some expression that would still further strengthen my position; for necessarily I was anxious to be sure of my ground before taking steps that it would be difficult to back out of.

I went to the warehouse accordingly, but was informed that a telegram had been received from Mr. Goldstein, saying that he had been taken ill and could not attend to business that day. To my mind this was pregnant with a grave meaning, and I lost no time in going out to Hampstead, where he lived. On arrival at his house I was informed that Mr. Goldstein was out of town, but I could get no information where he had gone to. Matters were now assuming a very serious aspect against him, and I deemed it my duty to obtain a warrant for his arrest, for I no longer had any doubt that he had fled. I obtained the warrant that afternoon, and the next day went down to the warehouse to inquire if anything was known of his whereabouts, and the confidential clerk informed me that he had received another telegram from Goldstein, who was in Southampton, asking him to send down to him at once a packet he had left in a drawer in his own desk. The clerk was about to comply with this request when I arrived; but I peremptorily told him that he must do nothing of the sort, as I held a warrant for Goldstein's arrest, and the packet would have to be placed in my hands, as it might facilitate the course of justice. He resolutely declined to part with the packet; but after some discussion he consented to open it in my presence and that of the manager. I agreed to this, and the manager was called in. The packet was a small box, neatly done up in brown paper, tied securely with string and sealed, and addressed in Goldstein's handwriting to himself. It was also marked in bold characters, in red ink, "Private." While I quite thought that the contents of the packet might afford me some valuable information, I was scarcely prepared for the revelation its examination made. The contents consisted of a cheque-book, a

bill of exchange in Goldstein's favour for five hundred pounds, and the *stolen necklace of pearls*. How any man could have been so idiotic as to thus betray himself is inconceivable, except by those who are acquainted with the ways of criminals, and know what stupid things they do.

I found on inquiry that a West India and River Plate steamer was due to leave Southampton on the following day, and it occurred to me that Goldstein might attempt to escape the penalty of his crime by taking passage in her for the Brazils. I therefore caught the next train down to Southampton. As I had surmised, I found that he had booked a passage by the steamer, and had already gone on board, as she was to leave on the flood tide very early in the morning. It was growing dusk as I got on board. Whether Goldstein had seen me coming or not I cannot tell, but I found that he was locked up in his cabin, and I at once commanded him in the name of the law to open the door and deliver himself up. No response was forthcoming, and again I made my demand. But the inmate of the cabin remained silent. Thereupon, as the captain was on shore, I took counsel with the chief officer, who, after some demur, consented to allow me to break open the door, and he summoned the carpenter aft, who proceeded to burst the lock by a blow with a capstan bar. Two blows did it, and as the door flew back it revealed Goldstein, dressed only in his trousers and shirt, his face white, haggard, and ghastly; his hair dishevelled, and his whole appearance suggestive of madness. In each hand he held a revolver, and as he caught sight of me he uttered a fearful oath, and, aiming at me, fired. Fortunately for myself, the bullet missed me, but grazed the cheek of the carpenter,

who was standing close beside me. He rushed away, and I dived behind the cabin table.

The noise of the firing brought a lot of people into the saloon, including several members of the crew, and an attempt was made to take the madman, but he kept us at bay with his revolvers. All his fury, however, seemed to be directed against myself, and he made desperate attempts to hit me, although he would not venture out of his cabin. Shot after shot was fired, and the beautifully decorated panels of the saloon were riddled and shattered. Matters had become so serious that the chief officer wanted me to take his revolver and try to maim Goldstein, but this I refused to do. With every shot he fired the fellow seemed to become more desperate. I had counted the shots, and knew that he had disposed of ten. One revolver he had thrown away, and he had two bullets left. He stood on guard for some minutes, and I attempted to draw his fire, but he had become less reckless, and watched my every movement as a bird of prey might watch its intended victim. As it was necessary to put an end to such a situation as this, I exposed myself in such a way as tempted him to fire, and he was thus left with but one shot. With a cry of pitiable despair, as he now recognized that all hope had gone, he turned the last shot against himself, and blew his brains out. It was a terrible penalty for his crime, and my heart was full of pity for his young wife and child.

When his boxes came to be searched, nearly all the stolen jewellery was found in them. He had taken a ticket for Rio Janeiro, where, no doubt, he hoped to dispose of his ill-gotten gains; but, like all criminals, he had committed the crime without duly weighing the consequences to those who loved and were dependent

upon him, and the fearful risks he incurred. When the seriousness of his offence fully dawned upon him, it drove him to that desperate state of mind which is akin to madness, and he resolved to die rather than be captured. But as it had been my painful duty to bring his sin to light, he cherished a hatred for me that could only have been satisfied with my death, and he had given evidence that he would not have hesitated to murder me. He had failed to accomplish this, however, and with his last shot he ended his own miserable life.

When Mr. Zimmermann heard of his partner's guilt and death, he was very greatly affected, and became seriously ill. He never rallied from the shock, and died in a few months, and the business passed into entirely fresh hands.

How Goldstein managed to commit the robbery, whether he had a confederate or not, was never discovered; but I ascertained that he was absent from his home all that Friday night, and the greater part of Saturday, so that, no doubt, was the time during which the theft was effected. He had tried very hard to create an impression by appearances that the robbery was the work of professional burglars, but he had allowed his anxiety and fear to overcome his caution and discretion so that he betrayed himself into my hands. It was all very sad, but also very human!

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

The night of the 14th of November, 1864, was remarkable as being one of the wildest and darkest that even this fickle English climate is capable of producing. The day had been sullen and gloomy from one end of the land to the other. The air was stagnant, the sky like a dome of lead. A heavy dripping moisture pervaded everything; and it almost seemed as if nature was in solemn mourning. By four o'clock every atom of light faded out, and an Egyptian darkness enfolded the earth. A little later the wind rose, but for a time moaned fitfully, though it gradually strengthened until it blew a gale, and it brought with it a snowstorm that threatened to stop traffic and block the roads.

About seven o'clock, in spite of the weather, and the warnings that were given to them, a man and woman, known as Dan and Sarah Gripper, set out from Bristol to walk to Bath. That fact indicates at once the social position which the people occupied. They belonged to the great army of professional tramps who are constantly moving about the country, and live goodness knows how. In the bright summer weather, when the days are long and the nights warm, there may be a certain amount of pleasure in this vagabond existence. But in the winter it is a round of discomfort, misery, and suffering. The Grippers were young people. He was thirty, she about five-and-twenty, and a really

good-looking woman, although her face had become rough and tanned with long exposure to wind and rain, and the constantly varying weather peculiar to our islands. But still, if not fair in the literal sense, she made up for it by regular features, a set of teeth that any one might have envied, and a wealth of soft brown hair, which, in spite of neglect and dirt, had grown most luxuriantly; and then her limbs were such that they would have begotten the admiration of an artist. Physically speaking, nature seemed to have made a perfect woman of her, and had also blessed her with a sound and robust constitution. Her husband was a different class of being altogether. He was a pure Romany. He had a swarthy face, dark piercing, almost fierce eyes, and hair that was as black as a raven's wing. He was a little man, but wiry and sinewy, and might have been backed for endurance against men of a much heavier and larger build.

He had been known upon the road for many years, and had travelled with one of the large vans which are at once shop and living house, and are usually conspicuous by the great display outside of them of chairs, brooms, mats, clothes-horses, and other wares of the kind. The Gripper family had travelled with such a van for generations, covering the ground from Land's End to London. Dan's father and mother at this period were the principal owners of the travelling warehouse, but Dan had a share in it. About two years previous to the night I am dealing with he had married, but no one seemed to know where his wife came from. It was evident she did not belong to the Romany fraternity, and it was rumoured that she had been a servant in a gentleman's house somewhere near Plymouth, and having fallen desperately in love with

the dark-eyed Gripper, she had become his wife, and had taken to the road. They seemed to have been greatly attached to each other. But both of them developed a liking for strong drink, and every now and then they had periodical outbreaks, and for two or three days at a time would be in a state of intoxication. Then they would have a sober period, during which they would not touch anything.

On the night that we find them in Bristol, they were recovering from one of their bouts. The van had preceded them by a couple of days, and had gone on to Bath. Dan and his wife had broken out in Taunton. Hence they had proceeded to Bristol, and had put up at a well-known tramps' house, called the "Jolly Waggoner." Here they had restored themselves to their normal condition, and, being very anxious to join their relatives in Bath, they set off as I have already stated. The people of the house tried hard to dissuade them on account of the weather, but they laughed at that, saying that no weather could stop them, and go they would. And go they did, but little could they have dreamed that owing to their determination, their names were destined to be in the mouths of people all over the country for many days to come.

As every one knows, the road between Bristol and Bath is one of the prettiest in England, and in the summer is really delightful. But on a winter night such as that was, with a snowstorm raging, it is as dreary and lonely as any road would be under similar conditions. However, the Grippers never took this into consideration. They were used to roughing it and facing the elements in all their moods; so off they set, intending to tramp all night, as they wanted to overtake

the van before it left Bath, in continuation of its journey north.

The following morning, about eight o'clock, a farmer was driving along the road from Bristol, and when about nine or ten miles out he was suddenly startled by seeing a woman lying on the ground, just on the edge of a wood. He alighted from his conveyance, thinking the woman was simply benumbed with cold. But, to his intense horror, he found that she was dead, and beyond all doubt had been murdered in a most savage and brutal manner. Firstly, a handkerchief had been tied so tightly round her throat that it was deeply indented into the flesh, and her tongue and eyes were protruding. Then her head had been battered in with some blunt instrument, probably a stone or a stick, and, as if this was not enough, she had been stabbed and slashed all over the body in a manner that was suggestive of the fury of madness. Not for a long time had a crime so horrible and brutal in all its aspects startled England.

Two miles farther on was a village, and to this the farmer drove and got assistance, and the rural constabulary took charge of the body.

Now came the question, who had done the deed? The husband, everybody answered. And yet they were never known to quarrel; they were strikingly attached to each other, and were like lovers when they set off from Bristol. But the theory was that Dan had been suddenly seized with frenzy, the result of his drinking bout, and in that condition had attacked and slaughtered his wife. This seemed borne out by the savage and unreasoning way in which the poor woman had been done to death. So the hue and cry was raised, the telegraph was set in motion, the country for miles and

miles round was scoured, but Dan could not be found, and this fact seemed confirmation strong that he was the murderer. I was sent down to investigate all the circumstances of the case, and try to get on his track.

Ghastly as the spectacle was, I examined the murdered woman's body carefully, and came to the conclusion myself that the murderer must have been suffering from frenzy. The handkerchief that was round her throat I took charge of, but could find no one who could identify it as having belonged to Dan. That was a significant fact that I could not overlook. Then near the spot where the body was found I picked up a large bone button, which had evidently come off a man's jacket. It was stained with blood. But every one who knew him declared that Dan had never worn a jacket with buttons on it like that one. This, again, was significant, and I asked myself if Dan was the murderer. But if he was not, where was he, why was he keeping out of the way? He certainly had not reached Bath, and his aged father and mother were in the deepest distress about him; and yet, in the course of an interview I had with them, they made it manifest, although they did not say so in so many words, that they believed Dan was the criminal. In fact, no one could be found who did not think so. His absence, of course, told against him.

After the fourth or fifth day of my investigations my views underwent a complete change. At first I certainly did think that Dan had battered his wife to pieces. But now I came to a totally different conclusion, and that conclusion was that Dan was not the murderer. This idea grew upon me so that I could not shake it off; but when I mentioned it to some of the local magnates I was laughed at. This, I need scarcely say, did not

alter my views, and so I repaired once more to the spot where the body had been found, and commenced a most critical examination of the place. I subjected the ground to the keenest scrutiny, and looked at every twig and branch for several yards round about, and presently I got indications which led me to believe that a body had been partly carried and partly dragged through the wood.

It will be remembered that on the night of the murder it snowed heavily, and this of course obliterated all ground marks, but there were signs about the bushes which I could not disregard, and I commenced a most exhaustive search in the wood. The traces I have spoken of failed a few yards from the spot where Mrs. Gripper had been found lying, but I adopted the plan of making that spot a pivot, as it were, around which I moved in a semi-circle, gradually extending the arc of movement in much the same way that circles on a pond, when a stone has been thrown in, extend. In this way I covered many acres of ground, and about a quarter of a mile from the pivot, down in a deep gully that was entirely overgrown with dead brambles and withered ferns, I found the dead body of Dan Gripper. His head had been battered in, and he had been stabbed in the back.

This discovery naturally gave a new sensation to the crime, and once more the land rang with it. There was now no longer any doubt that a double murder had been committed, and now came the question—who had been guilty of that dark night's work? Robbery was not the motive; for firstly, the Grippers had little or no money with them. They had spent what they had in their spree at Taunton; nor had they any valuables that were likely to have tempted the cupidity of any one. As a

matter of fact, a few shillings and some coppers were found in Dan's pockets, and the woman had on a wedding ring and a rather massive keeper. Besides, on such a night as that, highway robbers were not likely to have been prowling about the road awaiting for travellers. No, I was convinced that it was not a case of robbery, but jealously. The murderer had probably followed his victims until they had reached the loneliest part of the road, where cries would be unavailing. Then he had stunned the man by a violent and sudden blow on the head, and had next attacked the woman; half strangling her first, then battering her head and slashing the body. After that he carried Dan to where he was found; and I saw in this act an artfulness and cunning that were remarkable. He knew that Dan's absence would raise suspicion against him, and thus the real murderer would have time to make good his escape.

With this revelation of the double crime, I began my hunt for the murderer on quite different lines, and I turned my attention to discovering as much as possible about the past history of the unfortunate Mrs. Dan Gripper; for, sticking to my text that jealousy had been the cause of the crime, I naturally expected to pick up the clue to the mystery in the story of the woman's life. But let it not be supposed that while this was being done no attempts were made to arrest the criminal. Now that it was clear that Dan was a victim as well as his wife, it was no less obvious that there was a third person concerned, and that third person was undoubtedly a man. For the ferocity of the crime argued a man's strength, and only a man, and a strong one, could have carried Dan's body to where it was found. The only things so far in my

possession likely to be of any service in tracing the murderer were the button and the handkerchief which had been used to strangle the woman. But both these things were commonplace enough, and there was nothing striking about them. In spite, however, of every effort on the part of the police all over the country, the murderer was not taken, although several arrests were made, but it was soon proved that the persons arrested were in no way implicated, and, of course, they had to be discharged immediately.

As day after day went by, and the mystery of the barbarous crime remained unsolved, the public became clamorous, and the Press were not slow to say that there had been a want of vigilance; and that if proper steps had been taken in the first instance the murderer could not have escaped. As this was the stereotyped bunkum which is usually written by a class of journalists who consider themselves cleverer than any detective who has ever made his mark, no notice was taken of it, and in the meantime, while efforts were being made by the police to lay their hands on the real criminal, I worked silently and persistently on my own lines. Of course, the difficulty in the way of the police was this—suspicion did not point to any particular individual that could be described. No living soul was able to rise up and say, "I have reason to think that So-and-so may have committed this crime, and So-and-so is tall or short, dark or fair, young or old," as the case might be. In the absence of anything like this, the difficulties were almost insurmountable; and the police, so to speak, were groping in the dark, trusting to some vague chance that might put the murderer in their grasp. But that way of working did not recommend itself to me. The problems of crime, like all other pro-

blems, must be worked out logically, and I brought logic to bear in this instance, and, beginning at the Alpha, I was strongly hopeful that I should be able to trammel up Mrs. Gripper's history to the Omega, and by so doing strike the trail I was seeking for.

I learnt that Dan Gripper's wife was a Cornwall lass, and she had been born Sarah Bickle. Her birthplace was a fishing village on the wild coast, close to Penzance, and her folk had been fisherfolk for generations. For some time Sarah had helped her parents in their rough calling. She had been noted as an expert oarswoman, and it was said she could manage a boat as well as a man. During the time of her girlhood she laid in a plentiful stock of rude health and strength. But there came a day—which so frequently comes in the annals of fisherfolk—when the angry sea snatched the life out of her father, and sucked his body into its hungry maw. For some time Sarah helped to support her mother and two younger brothers by doing odd jobs—by mending fishing-nets, and by baiting and setting lobster-traps and selling the spoil. This went on until her mother died; then her younger brothers went to sea, and so Sarah betook herself to Plymouth and entered domestic service.

By this time Sarah had outgrown her girlhood, and the wild winds and briny air of her native Cornwall had given her a complexion that many a rich town lady would have paid thousands to have possessed. So far there had been nothing in her career out of the ordinary. It was the career of many hundreds and thousands of girls of her class all round the coast. But in Plymouth her life underwent some change. Her good looks, as they were sure to do, made her an object of attention on the part of numerous young men, and amongst them

was the youngest son—a youth of nineteen—of the people in whose service she was. This lad not only offered her marriage, but would have married her had not his father interfered, the result being that Sarah was dismissed, and the youthful admirer was packed off to some foreign part, where probably he soon got over his passion for the country-born fishergirl. At any rate, there was not the slightest reason for suspecting him of the crime. Still, pursuing my investigations, I brought to light that during the time her master's son had been paying his addresses to her, a young man named Jodrell Smart, a butcher by trade, and in the employment of a butcher in the town, was also enamoured of her. It was made manifest that she had at some period given him very considerable encouragement, and after she was dismissed from her place she took up with him very strongly, and it was thought amongst her acquaintances that she would become the wife of Jodrell Smart. He did not bear a very good character, however, inasmuch as he was fond of loose companions, and occasionally gave way to drink.

Now, whether this weighed with Sarah or not, was not very evident, but for some cause or other she broke off the connection, and took service in the family of a gentleman who lived in the country, fourteen or fifteen miles out of Plymouth. This incensed Smart, and he had been heard to vow deeply that while he lived she should never marry anybody unless she married him. No importance was attached to the threats, however, as he was regarded rather as a vain boaster.

I now considered that I had struck a trail, and I kept to it, neither swerving to the right nor left, and it led me to the discovery that Smart found out where she had

gone to, and began again to force his attentions upon her. But very soon after going to her new situation she met Dan Gripper at a local fair, and it would appear that it was almost a case of love at first sight. The dark-eyed gipsy and the roving life he led had a fascination for her, and within a week of meeting him she told the cook of the family in whose service she was that she was over head and ears in love with Gripper. Her passion was reciprocated, but it seems that she was rather afraid of her butcher lover, Jodrell Smart, and led him to suppose that some day she might possibly bestow her hand and heart upon him. But, as a matter of fact, her heart had gone out to Gripper, and twelve months after first knowing him she married him. From that moment Jodrell Smart became a changed man. He drank heavier, sank into a despondent, gloomy state, and repeatedly said that Sarah had ruined his life.

Thus I reached another important stage in my investigations; still, I had no evidence that Smart was the murderer; but my suspicions had grown, and they were strengthened when I ascertained that about a week before the committal of the crime Smart had left Plymouth and nobody knew whither he had gone, nor had anybody seen him since. He was described to me as a singularly powerful man, standing nearly six feet high. "Now," I exclaimed to myself, "I am on the track of the murderer."

My next step was to ascertain where he had gone to from Plymouth, and to this end I obtained his photograph, had it lithographed, then sent it out broadcast with a detailed description of the man, and I stated that he was supposed to be wearing a jacket with smoke-coloured bone buttons on it, and probably had in

his possession a large cotton handkerchief, with blue spots round the border.

In a few days I got information that Smart had been seen in Taunton. That was gravely significant, for had not the Grippers been in Taunton too? Now, what did that point to if it did not mean that Jodrell Smart was tracking them with the horrid demon Murder in his heart; but for some reason, no doubt because opportunity did not occur, the fiendish crime was not committed between Taunton and Bristol. But was it not logical to suppose that he followed them to Bristol, and by some means—and a revengeful and determined man never wants for means—he found out that on that dark November night his victims were going to tramp to Bath. Then he either followed them, or preceded them and lay in wait in that lonely spot, when, all prepared as he was with a bludgeon, he felled the man, and then attacked the woman.

All this seemed so clear, so logical, so feasible that it was difficult for a moment to doubt it was the correct theory. And so from one end of the land to the other I circulated the murderer's likeness and description; and about Christmas I learned that a wild, half-starved, haggard man had been seen on Dartmoor, and that he answered the description of the murderer. Dartmoor is a lonely, desolate region in winter, and a hunted man has little chance of his life. For many days we scoured such parts of the moor as were accessible, but without putting up our quarry, and though a lookout was kept all through the dreary winter months nothing was seen of him. But when the spring was pretty well advanced a shepherd found his body in a hole, where there had been a huge snow-drift. His identification was placed beyond all cavil. He was Jodrell Smart,

and one of the buttons from his jacket was missing. The button in my possession was precisely the same as those remaining on his jacket, and by that sign it was known that he was the murderer. So much was brought to light; but the details of the dreadful crime must for ever remain a mystery. After the commission of the deed the wretched man had betaken himself to the lonely moorlands in the hope that he would thereby be able to elude his fellow-man's justice. So he had, but the justice of the Lord had smitten him, and, shut off from every one, and everything that could have given him comfort, he perished miserably in his guilt as a branded Ishmael, against whom every one's hand was raised. It seems almost right to say that an end of that kind was fitting for one who had been guilty of such a dastardly and cruel crime.

OLD JINKS'S MONEY.

I was once sent for by a firm of lawyers who practised in a quiet little country town situated in Norfolk. They wished to consult me, they said, in a matter of very considerable importance, and they would feel obliged if I would lose no time in seeing them. I therefore set off at once from London, and arrived at my destination on the afternoon of a delightful summer day. The country round about was charming; and as the light from a cloudless sky fell upon it, I thought it was as pretty a panorama as I had seen for some time.

I found that the little town was a restful, dreamy, Sleepy-hollow sort of place; with the grass growing up between the cobble-stones in the High Street. The Town Hall was an old red brick, tumble-down building, standing on arches in the very centre of the High Street, and bearing date 1617. The arches were the common playground of the arabs, and general meeting-place for the men-folk who assembled there to smoke and discuss weighty affairs of State, and particularly the affairs of their neighbours. The "oldest inhabitant," a toothless old fossil nigh on to five score, was a walking encyclopædia so far as that particular strip of country went, for he had been born there, and had never in the whole course of his long existence been more than fifty miles away, except once when he was first married and he took "'t'owd ooman to Lunnun." But "by gomm" he never went again; for it "wur the wickedest plaäce"

as ever he "seed," and not only was "t'owd ooman's hankurcher" stolen, but they actually took his silver watch that had belonged to his grandfather, and he had heard his grandfather say himself that the watch cost "five punter." This interesting mummy had very pronounced views on things in general, and he was decidedly of opinion that the world had gone to the devil since he "wur a lad," what "wi' new-fangled noötions of radways, and telegraph, and such like abominations." Foäk in my day," he exclaimed indignantly in the course of a conversation I had with him, "wur content to ride in coächers, and didn'd want none o' yur 'spress trains what is allers a-killing somebody." He waxed wroth when I ventured to suggest that the exigencies of modern existence necessitated a more rapid means of locomotion than that which satisfied our grandfathers.

"Noä, noä," he cried, "nowt o' sort. What wur good enough for foäk in my day is good enough now. What good does your railways do, 'cept fill t' pockets o' t' owners on 'em."

I found that Mr. Howden, the head of the firm of lawyers at whose request I had gone down to this out-of-the-world little place, was a typical country lawyer, not very far behind the "oldest inhabitant" in point of age, but still a hale man, with a fondness for snuff and old port wine. The modern fever of haste and bustle had not affected him, for he did everything with a slowness and deliberateness that taxed one's patience sorely, and seemed to suggest that he had some idea he was going to live for another century or so. With a great deal of unnecessary detail, and with a round-aboutness which caused me to wonder if he would ever come to the main point, he told me the following story, which I give

in outline only, as being sufficient to indicate the nature of the case I was called upon to investigate.

Samuel Jinkinson had been born in the neighbourhood eighty years back. He was the son of the then Squire, and was a wild rascal in his youth, a portion of which had been spent in London, and the other portion in travelling abroad. At last he married Miss Oldcroft, the harum-scarum daughter of Oldcroft the miller, who had made a bit of money, and given his "gal" a fair proportion of it when she married. Sarah Oldcroft, while being regarded as the village belle, was also unanimously voted to be the worst of coquettes and the most heartless of young women. The village croakers, therefore, were not slow to predict that Samuel Jinkinson would soon find he had made a wrong choice; nor were they wrong in this particular instance, for it was speedily made manifest that they were as ill-sorted a couple as ever came together. A daughter was born and died in her infancy, and then a son came and lived. When the boy was only four years old the mother took herself off and went to London. Her husband did not make any efforts to bring her back, but concentrated all his affections and hopes on his boy, who remained with him until he was fifteen years of age, when his wife, through her relations, succeeded in poisoning the boy's mind against his father, with the result that the lad went off to his mother, and Jinkinson was broken-hearted. From that time he became quite a changed man; and as the years passed on he grew into a misanthrope, shunning his acquaintances and neighbours, and living an isolated, lonely life on his estate, which he let out to farmers, and proved one of the most exacting of landlords. His habits became those of a miser, and while he would not

spend a penny on improvements, he took good care to collect his dues to the uttermost farthing. So matters went on for many years, and he had become a grumpy, soured, broken man.

He had taken up his residence in a cottage which stood in one of his fields; and a woman known in the village as Betsy Clarke became his housekeeper. Betsy was the widow of a farmer, and at the time she entered the service of Mr. Jinkinson as his housekeeper she was nearly forty years of age.

Many more years passed. Jinkinson grew old, and was familiarly known to all the villagers, and for miles around, as "Old Jinks." As the years gathered about him he became more crotchety and eccentric, and his miserly habits increased. He looked after his rents with the keenness quite characteristic of the miser; but not a penny piece would he spend on his property, except to keep fences in repair, and even then he would haggle and quarrel about a halfpenny. Portions of his estate he subsequently sold, realizing far more than its value. But it was bought by a wealthy gentleman who came to live in the neighbourhood, and who was anxious to extend his own grounds, which adjoined Jinks's. And as money was no object to him, and as Jinks would not sell it until tempted by a big price, the land was secured.

Now, there was a circumstance in connection with Jinks which sorely exercised the minds of the rural population. What did he do with his money? He kept no banking account, he spent very little, and his wealth was always increasing. Before concluding the bargain about the sale of the land, he stipulated that the purchaser's lawyers should pay him the amount agreed upon in coins of the realm. This was done, and

Jinks carried the coins off in a big canvas bag. Of course, as was only natural, Betsy Clarke was frequently asked what the old fellow did with his money, but her invariable answer was—

"What's the use 'er asking me? I ain't got nothink to do wi' it. And the old man don't make me his banker."

People believed as much of this as they liked; and it was considered most unlikely that Betsy could live as long as she had done with the old man and be entirely ignorant of the manner in which he disposed of his money. Many nasty things were said about her, and hints were freely dropped about her looking after her own ends and feathering her own nest, &c.; for spiteful folk are to be found everywhere. However, as Jinks never complained about his housekeeper, and, indeed, seemed perfectly satisfied, no one else had any right to interfere. But still, curiosity ran high, though it was never gratified.

So the years sped, and Jinks's hair became snow-white, his cheeks hollow, his form bent, and his footsteps halting and feeble. With advancing age his miserly habits, if anything, increased, and it was currently rumoured that he and old Betsy lived on a few pence a day, and that fires and lights of any kind in the house were almost unknown. The money, therefore, went on accumulating; but what became of it? Not a penny piece would the old man give away. And he did not spend a hundredth part of what he received.

When he was about seventy-five years of age he began to think that his sands were nearly run out, and one day he called on the firm of lawyers of which Mr. Howden was the head, and, requesting that he might see this

gentleman in private, he told him—having first exacted a promise of secrecy from him—that he wished to make a will.

As may be supposed, Mr. Howden was much surprised, and asked old Jinks to whom he was going to leave his money.

"To my son," was the old fellow's answer. "He is an ingrate, and has never been near me since he went away; but, then, I cannot take my money into the grave, and I've no one else to leave it to. Besides, he is my son after all," the old man added pathetically.

Mr. Howden asked him if he knew where his son was, but he said he did not, though he considered there would be no difficulty in finding him.

"And will you leave him everything?" Mr. Howden inquired.

"Everything," was the answer.

"Without any restrictions?"

"Without any restrictions whatever."

Mr. Howden next ventured to hint that perhaps Mr. Jinkinson would like to acknowledge the long and faithful services of his housekeeper in some way. But on this the old man got raspy, and said—

"Don't you bother about Betsy. I'll see that Betsy doesn't want for anything, and before I die I'll give her good honest coin of the realm, so that she won't be bothered with any of you lawyers."

This remark suggested to Mr. Howden to remind his strange client that, according to common rumour, he kept no banking account, and that he must have his money hoarded somewhere. Upon this old Jinks smiled, as though he considered a great compliment had been paid to him, and, with a knowing wink, he answered—

"Well, of course, if you don't know where to find the money you could not give it to my son, could you? But you can make your mind easy; it will be all right."

The lawyer urged upon him the importance of revealing his hiding-place, as otherwise there might be considerable trouble; and at last, after much pondering, old Jinks wrote on a slip of paper, which he made Howden promise faithfully he would keep a secret until the time came to use the money, that he had accumulated a sum of nearly forty thousand pounds in notes and gold, and that the money was tied up in a sack, which was carefully stowed away in a little loft over his bedroom, and the only access to the loft was by a trap-door in the ceiling of his room. Every night before he retired he climbed up into the loft to see that his money was all right, and the ladder he used for getting up to the loft he kept underneath the boards in his room. He had arranged two of the boards so that he could lift them with the greatest ease, and over the boards he had spread a piece of carpet. He flattered himself that no living soul knew of his hiding-place, not even his housekeeper; and in order to throw her off the scent he had frequently displayed before her a wooden bucket, in which he kept a few hundred pounds in gold, and this bucket was kept concealed in a disused and perfectly dry well in the orchard.

Such was the story as told by old Jinks, and as the lawyer knew that he had been hoarding and accumulating for very many years, there was no reason whatever to doubt his statement as to the amount. A will was therefore carefully prepared, and by it everything was left to the son, or, in the event of his death and his leaving children behind him, it was to go to the children.

But failing children, the money was to be used for building and endowing an orphan asylum, which was to be erected on the old man's land, and was to be known for all time as "Jinkinson's Home."

These details and wishes of the testator were set forth with great preciseness, and the will was drawn up with a view of avoiding any subsequent misunderstanding. And, at last, all being right and in perfect order, it was duly signed and attested; one of the witnesses, by the old man's request, being Betsy Clarke, his housekeeper.

So far, then, all was well, and old Jinks seemed highly satisfied with what he had done, and in the lawyer's hearing said—

"Now, if my son would only come and see me I should die happy."

Whereupon Mr. Howden suggested that the son should be found, and requested to come and see his father. But on this Jinks flared with anger and exclaimed—

"No, no! If he won't come of his own free will, he sha'n't come at all. And when he has my money after I'm dead it will be like gall and wormwood to him, and his conscience will prick him as long as he lives."

This was a strange idea of Jinks; but as no one had any interest in contradicting him, he had his way, and about a year later he died suddenly of sheer old age. He was known to have become very feeble six months before his death, and for three months his familiar figure had been missed from the village; but until Betsy Clarke gave the information that he was dead, no one had any idea that he had passed away to his eternal rest. As no medical man had attended him, an inquest and *post-mortem* became necessary; but this left no doubt about his having died from extreme age.

As soon as Mr. Howden heard of old Jinks's decease, he lost no time in proceeding with his son and his two business partners to Jinks's house, in order to secure the money, and place it in the bank, but no money was found in the loft. And when Betsy heard what they had come about, she smiled and told them she knew where the old man's money was, and led them to the well, where, sure enough, in a bucket, a sum of a little over a thousand pounds in gold and silver was found. That was all in accord with what Jinks had told the lawyer; but it was absolutely certain that it did not represent all the testator possessed. Betsy pleaded entire ignorance of any other place of concealment, and declared that old Jinks had always given her to understand he kept his money in the well, and she had never seen him put any anywhere else.

On the face of it, it seemed absurd to suppose that the old man, after a generation and more of scraping and hoarding, had died worth only about a thousand pounds. It was well known what his property brought in, and, besides his annual income, there was the large sum he had received for the sale of a portion of his estate. What had become of that?

A most exhaustive search was made of the premises, but without any result. Nothing further was forthcoming, and so from lip to lip was bandied the question—

"What has become of old Jinks's money?"

Mr. Howden was convinced in his own mind that Jinks had not deceived him, and he came to the conclusion that the money had been stolen; and though his suspicions fell upon Betsy Clarke, he could not get a shred of proof to support him, and in the dilemma he sent for me; for it was a serious business, as until the money was found the provisions of the will could not be

carried out, though steps were at once taken to trace the heir.

Such was the story and particulars I got from Mr. Howden, and I could hardly have done otherwise than have come to the conclusion that Betsy Clarke was not so ignorant of where the money was as she pretended to be. I therefore sought an interview with her.

She was an old, cross-grained woman, surly and sour, as well she might be, after the many years of hermit-like life she had passed with the miserly old Jinks, whose parsimony led him to deny himself and her anything that was not absolutely necessary to keep body and soul together. And yet, strangely enough, he had lived a good deal beyond the allotted span, and she was turned seventy. So that it seemed as if hard fare, together with cheerlessness and discomfort, had not tended to shorten their lives.

I was by no means struck with Betsy. She gave me the impression of being a shifty and untruthful old woman, and notwithstanding that she had been so long in his service, she had not a good word to say for him.

"But did he not leave you anything?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; he gave me a paltry five hundred pounds a few days afore he died. But then, I suppose, it will do me my time, and keep me out of the workhouse."

"When you knew he was likely to die, why didn't you get medical advice?"

"I didn't know he was a-dying," she growled. "Fact is, he'd been a-dying for many years according to his own account, and I'd come to think he would live longer than I should."

"But still, you must have seen at last that he was going. Why did you let him die without any one knowing even that he was near his end?"

"He would not let me tell any one, and he would not have a doctor. He hated doctors. He said as they was all a parcel o' ignorant quacks, what took your money, and did nothing for you."

"But still, in justice to yourself, you ought to have got assistance," I urged.

"Perhaps I should, but we ain't always got our wits about us. If I'd a-knowed as he was really a-dying, I'd a-got assistance for him, for I wur worrit enough, I can tell you."

After this interview I felt sure that even if Betsy did not know anything about Jinks's money, she was an artful and untruthful woman. But the fact is, I strongly suspected that she did know. If this was true, however, it was very evident that she must have had a confederate. Perhaps more than one; for if there was as much specie as the testator gave his lawyer to understand there was, it would have been difficult to remove, except by small quantities at a time; or if taken away in bulk, it would have necessitated two or three strong men. I therefore began to make careful inquiries as to what relatives or acquaintances Betsy had. Of acquaintances—except one of the most casual kind—she seemed to have none, for she had kept herself as secluded as her master had done. But I ascertained that in the town of Norwich she had a daughter and son-in-law living, and they had several children, all of them grown up. The daughter's name was Carmichael, and her husband had for some years been steward to Sir Joseph Paterson, the M.P. But on Sir Joseph's death Carmichael was thrown out of employment; and since then he had earned a precarious living by giving lessons on the violin, an instrument that he had learned to play exceedingly well. There is no doubt that he and his

wife and a grown-up son, who was consumptive and lived with them, had suffered a good deal of hardship and privation. But it came to my knowledge that Betsy occasionally visited them; and whenever she did so she always left something behind.

Up to this point there was nothing that justified suspicion attaching itself to the Carmichaels, although they were the only relatives Betsy had, and the only people she visited. Therefore, unless she herself had stolen old Jinks's money little by little, and had hidden it away somewhere, and had told her secret to no living being, she must have had assistance; and who were more likely to have been taken into her confidence than the Carmichaels? Of course there was the other alternative, which was that Jinks had not hoarded any money. But the reader will see for himself how utterly improbable that was, having regard to the very considerable income he was known to derive from his property. So I dismissed the idea as one that was wholly untenable, and worked upon the assumption that Betsy had a guilty secret, which I resolved to find out, and to that end I set a very careful watch on the Carmichaels' actions, feeling perfectly sure that if they had possessed themselves of the money, they would sooner or later commit some act which would betray them.

I may mention, as fully testifying to old Jinks's accuracy of detail, on this occasion of visiting Mr. Howden about the will, that the ladder he had spoken of as being under his floor in his bedroom was duly found there; and the woodwork about the trap-door, that gave access to the loft, bore every sign of some one having frequently passed up and down. So far, then, everything turned out exactly as he had said, with the exception of the bag of money being in the loft.

For some weeks, in spite of the utmost vigilance, I was unable to obtain the faintest clue calculated to aid me in any way. In the meantime Jinks's son had been found. He had passed middle life. His mother had been dead many years, and he was married and the father of a large family, but was in easy circumstances, for he was in business as a saddle and harness maker on his own account, and had a very good connection. This fact, however, did not render him less eager to obtain his father's—old Jinks's—money according to his rights, if it could be found.

Old Betsy Clarke left the neighbourhood soon after Jinks's funeral, and took up her residence with the Carmichaels in Norwich, and about three months later I learned that Carmichael had been to Liverpool, making inquiries as to the cost of passage for himself and family to New Zealand; and shortly after he set about trying to let his house, upon which he had an unexpired lease of six years to run.

These circumstances seemed to me suspicious, and I shadowed him more closely than ever. In consequence, it came to my knowledge that Mrs. Carmichael had been up to London making extensive purchases of clothing and other things for the family; while her husband had been discharging some long-standing liabilities in the neighbourhood, and had paid a hundred and twenty guineas for a Stradivarius violin, which he had long coveted, and which had been in possession of a well-known collector in Norwich. Now, for a man who had long been steeped in poverty to suddenly launch out like this pointed ominously to there being something that was not fair and above board. Of course, I did not overlook the possibility that he was drawing the money from his mother-in-law.

But, if that were really the case, it did not seem to me in accord with common sense that he would have rushed into such lavish expenditure. The ability to pay so large a price as one hundred and twenty guineas for a violin certainly argued possession of a good deal more. There was another suspicious element, the value of which I duly weighed. He kept no banking account, and all his payments were made in cash, the violin being paid for in sovereigns. With these facts before me, I took counsel with the local authorities, and it was decided that there was sufficient evidence to go before a magistrate with, and apply for a warrant to search Carmichael's house, on suspicion of his being in unlawful possession of stolen money. The warrant was accordingly granted, and my appearance at the Carmichaels', and my demand in the name of the law to search their house was like the shock of a thunderbolt to them. Their agitation and reluctance to comply with my demand betrayed guilty knowledge of some kind. Then I felt sure I was on the right track, and in less than half an hour I discovered in the coal-cellar, well covered up with coals, a coarse canvas sack containing a very large sum of money. As Carmichael could not account for the possession of this he was arrested, and, the little game being thus spoiled, he confessed that at his mother-in-law's request he had gradually removed the money from Jinks's loft during the time that the old man lay insensible.

Betsy Clarke had, with extreme artfulness, arranged the whole plan. When she found that the old man had made a will leaving his hoard of gold to his unworthy and ungrateful son, it made her furious, for she considered that if any one had a right to it she had, after her many years of service with Jinks. Morally, it might

have been argued that she was justified in this belief; but legally, of course, she hadn't a leg to stand upon. But so great was the shock and disappointment to her, that she took to her bed, and in six weeks' time was dead. What money she had in her own right, she left to her son-in-law, and out of it he made good what had been spent of the stolen money; and in consideration of the peculiarity of all the circumstances of the case, and in the belief that he had been instigated to remove the money by his mother-in-law, he got off with the light punishment of three months' imprisonment for unlawful possession. I was really sorry for Carmichael, as up to then he had borne an irreproachable character; while, on the other hand, the heir had been a drinker for years, and was by no means either a model father or a good husband. However, those were matters outside the cognisance of the law, and could not be taken into account. He was lawfully entitled to old Jinks's money, and got it. Whether it brought him happiness or not, and enabled him to leave the world better than he found it, I cannot say.

THE PRINCE OF SMASHERS.

Some years ago notice was sent down to Scotland Yard from the Mint authorities that a very large quantity of spurious coin was in circulation over the kingdom, and there was reason to believe that these coins were being manufactured in London. A request was therefore made that the most energetic steps might be taken to stop the making of the coins, and to bring the guilty parties to justice. Specimens of the coins accompanied the communication. They consisted of sixpences, shillings, florins, half-crowns, and five-shilling pieces. I have already stated in another part of the book that it is very rarely the case that the professional coiner ventures to imitate sovereigns or half-sovereigns, owing to the difficulties he has to encounter. Firstly, as regards the colour, and secondly, as regards the general get-up, for the reader need scarcely be reminded that spurious gold coins are more easily detected than silver ones; consequently, there is greater risk, and the capital required to be invested is very considerable. Of course, even spurious silver coins require a pretty large plant, so that the rascals who go in for the business need money to begin with.

As I had had a good deal of experience in bringing smashers to book, I was requested to go into the matter in the present instance, and try to get on the track of the criminals. The coins that had been sent to us were really very good specimens of their kind, and were made with so much skill and care that the casual

observer was very likely to be deceived by their appearance. One of the greatest difficulties in regard to spurious money is to produce a coin that will sound well when rung. Generally speaking, they have a dull, dead sound that at once betrays them. But in this case the sound was exceedingly good, and four people out of every five would have pronounced them genuine. Then again, to obtain the necessary hardness is another sore obstacle to the coiner; for it need scarcely be said that a coin that would bend and break between the fingers would be of little use. But here again a wonderful amount of success had been obtained, and no amount of ordinary finger-pressure could alter the shape of the coins; while as to colour, milling, and stamping, they were as near the genuine thing as they could well be as imitations. Under a powerful magnifying-glass they showed very serious defects, which to the practised eye were sufficient to at once pronounce them spurious. And then their weight was in no case accurate. But these were points which in an ordinary way were not likely to lead to detection.

Now, it was perfectly clear to my mind, from a consideration of the details I have enumerated, that these coins had been made by experts in the business, for they had been turned out in a thoroughly workmanlike style, and could not have been got up in the way they were by mere tyros at the trade. This in itself was significant, as it enabled me to determine that we had to contend with some old and practised hands. There is another point in connection with the smasher's art. He seldom works alone; that is if he goes in for it extensively, for one man cannot do all that is required. He must have confederates. And as a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, so a gang of rascals who

have combined together to cheat and swindle their fellow-men is liable at any moment to be betrayed by one of its half-hearted and weak-minded members. Now, it is an axiom with us that such a member is always to be found in a gang, and the thing is to get hold of him. What I mean to say is, that it is relatively easier to bring a gang of marauders to book, than a single one. Bearing this in mind, and feeling convinced that I had to deal with numbers, I was sanguine of being able to run them to earth.

Let it be remembered that at this time I had not the very faintest clue to the criminals, so that at the beginning it was groping in the dark. But of one thing I was sure, and that was that they were no ordinary criminals, but had gone into business on an extensive scale; and it was obvious that they had both plant and money. Perhaps I need scarcely remark that "smashing"—as false coining is termed in the argot of the slums—is a profitable business *if* it can only be carried out on an extensive scale. But note the italicized "if." That is a very big "if" indeed, for the risks are so great, and the penalties on conviction so heavy, that it is only the most daring and reckless who will go in for it. Still, there are men who, in their greed for gain, will run the risks, and so every now and then we hear of bad money being put into circulation.

On applying to the Mint authorities, I found that they were without any information likely to be of use in aiding me. They based their belief that the coins were being manufactured in London on the fact that they had had no complaints from any other part of the country. The coins they had collected had been sent in by people who had been victimized; and as it is only a very small percentage of victims who send the

coins in on such occasions, it followed as a logical conclusion that operations on a pretty extended scale were being carried out by the enterprising smashers.

For some weeks I sought, but in vain, to get a clue, until at last I heard that a young woman had tendered a spurious five-shilling piece to a shopkeeper in Chelsea. The woman had been detained, but it was found that she was a highly respectable servant in a family in the neighbourhood, as her mistress had sent her with the five-shilling piece to make some small purchases. I lost no time in seeing the mistress. She was a widow lady, and she informed me that she had received the five-shilling piece in change for a sovereign which she had tendered in order to pay for some fish she had purchased at a fishmonger's. To the fishmonger accordingly I hied my way, and there inquiry revealed the fact that one of his men, who had been to Billingsgate that morning to buy fish, had received the coin from a salesman in the market; and the salesman I found remembered having taken it at a neighbouring coffee-house, where he had had his breakfast. It was given to him with change for half-a-sovereign. The coffee-house people, who did a large trade in the morning during the market hours, could not remember where they had got the five-shilling piece. It had evidently been given to them by a customer.

Thus far I was enabled to trace the career of this interesting coin. But beyond that point I could not then go. I took it as a sign, however, that probably the smashers were at work in the neighbourhood, taking advantage of the bustle and business of the morning, during the market time, to get rid of the bad money. I therefore caused an intimation to be given to the various salesmen, as well as the coffee-house keepers

round about, to keep a sharp eye on the money they received, and in a few days confirmation of my surmise was received, for I learnt that several bad shillings and sixpences had been passed, though by whom there was no evidence forthcoming. This caused me to redouble my vigilance in the neighbourhood, and one afternoon word was hurriedly brought to me that a woman had tendered a bad five-shilling piece in a coffee-shop, and the people had detained her pending my arrival.

I found the woman to be a decently-clad person of middle age, who apparently was in the deepest distress. She represented herself as the wife of a working man, living in Kent Street, Borough, and she said she had got the money from her husband, who was a labourer, and it had been paid to him as part of his wages. In order to test the truth of this story, I accompanied her to her home, which was an unusually well-furnished place for the district. But her husband, I ascertained, instead of being a working man, was a loafer with no fixed means of earning his living. He averred that he had taken the coin somewhere as part change for a sovereign, though where he could not remember. This, of course, was very suspicious, and, apart from that, he could not be described as one of the "horny handed." His appearance was more suggestive of a skilled artisan in some light trade; and I discovered by persistent inquiry that he was a watchmaker by trade. He seemed to be unusually shrewd and intelligent, though not educated. He was known in the neighbourhood as Richard Worboys. As far as I could learn, there was no criminal record against him, and as I felt that in the present instance there might be some difficulty in sustaining a charge, and that if he were arrested, his associates, if he had any, would take fright, and so the

ends of justice might be defeated, I resolved not to arrest him, but simply to caution him that he must be more careful for the future.

It must be understood that I was strongly of opinion that through this man I had struck a trail. I had seen enough to warrant me in supposing that he was a rascal, but the tool of others, and so I decided to shadow him. About a fortnight later I followed him to Victoria Railway Station. It was in the evening, and he took a ticket for Boulogne. For a man of his class and stamp to go to France was in itself a suspicious circumstance, and appeared to me to point to some guilty knowledge. Need I say, therefore, that I accompanied him to French soil, and the following morning saw him enter a small villa a little way out of the town, and facing the sea. This villa was in the occupation of an Englishman who was described as a retired schoolmaster, and, as he had apparently plenty of money and paid his way, he was much respected. He was represented as being married, and his wife and a son lived with him. The name he was known by was William Herman, and he had occupied the villa for about a year.

Of course, I had no authority to prefer any charge against Herman; and even if I had, the French police would not have listened to it unless I had been in a position to furnish them with proof, and at that moment I had no proof, though my suspicions were strengthened. That afternoon I had the opportunity of observing Mr. Herman. He and his visitor Worboys from London went out for a stroll on the beach. Herman was a tall, gentlemanly-looking man with grey hair and whiskers, and his eyes were concealed with a pair of large blue glasses. But whether they were worn merely as a disguise, or on account of weak eyes, I could not then determine.

Worboys spent three days at Boulogne, and then took his departure for London, and again I accompanied him. Within a week of his return I caught his wife in the act of trying to palm off a spurious five-shilling piece on an unsuspecting shopkeeper in South London, and now I had no hesitation in arresting her. That done, I procured a warrant to search her husband's house, with the result that I found under the boards of a bedroom, and between the floor and the ceiling, spurious silver coins representing about twenty-five pounds. This was a most important discovery, but I was sure that Worboys was only a tool, and that the arch-villain was the person representing himself as William Herman who lived in Boulogne. So, having secured Worboys and his wife, I posted off to Boulogne, and sought an interview with Mr. Herman. I knew that if he was what I suspected him to be, I should have to deal cautiously with him, and so I opened the ball by saying—

"A pal of mine has sent me to you, Mr. Herman."

He seemed a little astonished, and I knew that he was scrutinizing me through his blue glasses.

"Indeed!" he answered; "and pray who is your *pal*, as you are pleased to term him?" He laid great stress on the word "pal," as though he had great contempt for the slang.

"He is Mr. Worboys," I answered meekly.

"Worboys—Worboys?" he muttered. "Oh yes, I think I once knew a person by that name."

"He told me I should find you square," I remarked.

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply, and with well-assumed indignation; and I saw that I was in the presence of a cautious, calculating rascal, though I felt confident I should trap him, for I had not the slightest

doubt he was an adventurer. So, although we were alone, I lowered my voice to a confidential whisper, and answered--

"Well, my good old pal, Dick Worboys, told me that I might do a trade with you."

"Really," exclaimed this interesting gentleman, "I don't know what you mean, and I must ask you to be more explicit."

"Now look here, governor," I said, "don't you see I could not have come here without Worboys had sent me, and you well know what he has sent me about."

"What's your name?" he demanded sternly.

"Harry Spicer."

"Well, now, bluntly, what do you want, Harry?"

"I want some coins," I returned.

I saw the expression on his face change, and the colour come and go. He was evidently taken a little off his guard. But quickly recovering himself, he broke into a little laugh as he said—

"Really, my dear sir, you are either a madman or a fool, or else you are talking in riddles on purpose to mystify me."

"Do you think so, governor?" I remarked cautiously. "Well, the fact is, I'm neither mad nor a fool; and I'm not talking in riddles unless my chum Worboys has sold me and sent me on a false lay."

"Perhaps he has," was the answer.

"If he has," I exclaimed, with an assumption of passion, "I'll strangle the life out of him. He told me you were a smasher, and could supply me with any amount of rummy uns (bad coins). I'm jannock and square, and don't like being made a mug of. So say, straight off, whether it's going to be a deal or not."

It was obvious that the bump of caution was very largely developed in Mr. Herman's head, for after gazing at me for some time, he remarked—

"Well, look here, my good friend, I think you've made a mistake this time, and you had better return to your friend, Mr. Worboys, and ask him what he means by sending you to me."

I confess that I was a little taken aback by the fellow's coolness and self-possession, and he proved that he was a very consummate actor, for he acted his part splendidly. Of course I was not deceived, for I was absolutely convinced that he was acting, and I had a feeling that I could induce him to give himself away, as the saying is, so I delivered this parting shot—

"Well, now, look here, it's no use your trying the parson dodge with me. Worboys and I are old pals, and he wouldn't have sent me over here on a fool's errand. Now, give us the straight tip, old man. Are you open to trade to the extent of a couple of hundred pounds?"

He looked hard at me, and the expression of his face was that of struggling indecision.

"Have you two hundred pounds?" he asked.

"That's a Scotch way of answering a question," said I.

"Will you trade?"

"Tell me if you have two hundred pounds?" he persisted.

"I have," I answered.

"And you would like to turn it into five?"

"I should."

"Then you come back to-morrow about this time, and I'll have a further talk with you, and I may be able to put you on to a good thing."

"I've netted him," I thought, as I took my departure. As may be supposed, I did not fail to keep my appointment the following day, and Mr. Herman proceeded to question me very closely about Worboys and my connection with him. I answered his questions or foiled them in such a way as not to arouse his suspicions, and at last he asked—

"For two hundred pounds, what amount of coins would you expect, supposing—of course, I only say supposing—I could supply them?"

"Not less than six hundred pounds."

"Phew!" he whistled, "that's a large sum."

"It is. But look at the risk."

"Well, the fact is," he remarked hesitatingly, "I have not got so much stock in hand. Would it do in a fortnight?"

"Hoorah!" I mentally exclaimed, "I've hooked my fish at last," and turning to him, I said, "That's a long time; but I suppose I must wait. But have you no stock at all in hand?"

"A little," he answered.

"How much altogether?"

"Well, probably between thirty and forty pounds. Would you buy that?"

"No, I would rather wait till you could let me have the lot."

"As you will," he remarked, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Then, if you come in three or four days' time I will let you know what is being done."

He bowed me out, and I thought to myself, "I am much mistaken, my fine gentleman, if I do not return before three or four days have expired."

I lost no time in seeking an interview with the chief of the police, before whom I laid sworn information that

I had every reason to believe Mr. Herman was a coiner, carrying on extensive operations. This information was laid before the Prefect, who ordered a warrant to be issued and executed at once. The result was I returned to Mr. Herman's residence the same afternoon in company with two policeman and four gendarmes. When Herman saw us he was flabbergasted. He knew that the game was up, and as he recognized me he suddenly drew a revolver from his pocket, and, aiming it at my head, was about to fire, when one of the gendarmes with his sword knocked the weapon out of the fellow's hand, and he was instantly seized and bound. A search of the premises revealed in the basement the most remarkable and complete coining plant ever seen out of a legitimate establishment. There was everything and every appliance for carrying on the illicit trade of manufacturing sham money. Herman had gone into it thoroughly equipped in every possible way for his villainous business. We soon learned that Herman was only one of many aliases under which the fellow had gone, and that his real name was James Goldsworthy, and that he had already served a term of imprisonment in England for forgery. He belonged to a respectable family, and had been apprenticed to an engraver, but his eyes suffering, he obtained a situation in the Mint through some influence his father possessed, and there he remained for two years. After that he had lived by his wits. Under the extradition treaty he was conveyed to England for trial, together with his son and daughter, who were also arrested, and proved to be confederates. Worboys, whose real name was Harry Jackson, who had also been in prison before, together with his wife, were likewise arrested, and as the net tightened we swept six other

people into it, and one of them, to save his skin, turned Queen's evidence, and supplied us with information which enabled us to ensure a conviction. James Goldsworthy—who was aptly described as the Prince of Coiners—was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, and his confederates got varying terms of imprisonment. Thus did we stamp out this very dangerous gang of smashers.

THE THREAD OF SILK.

Nearly a generation ago there stood in Portland Street, Manchester, a large warehouse in the occupation of Fabermann, Weber & Co., a German firm of general warehousemen. It was before the street underwent the alteration which turned it into the fine thoroughfare it now is. At the time I am speaking of it was a shabby-looking, tumble-down by-way, connecting Oxford Street with Piccadilly. Next to Fabermann, Weber & Co.'s place was a large plot of waste ground, which for many years had been a howling wilderness, and a receptacle for all sorts of rubbish. A massive, decaying board had long announced that the land was for sale, but no purchaser seemed to be forthcoming. The plot had been fenced round, but the fencing was broken away in places, and through the gaps the gutter-urchins used to creep and make fires on the land, which at night was the haunt of stray cats and dogs, and human waifs of both sexes. It was a melancholy spot, foul smelling and full of corruption, and as strangers passed they wondered how it was that a wealthy Corporation such as Cottonopolis possessed should have allowed a forlorn and desolate waste to exist in the city where there was so much wealth and grandeur. At last the well-known circus-proprietor, Pablo Fanque, obtained a short lease of it, and forthwith proceeded to clear away the rubbish, and erect thereon a handsome wooden building as a circus; quite a little army of

workmen being employed to carry out the necessary work. The gable end of the warehouse abutted on the land, and the stables for the circus-horses adjoined on to the wall of the warehouse, and ran the whole length of it from back to front.

About two months after the circus had been opened, and between the hours of midnight and early dawn, a mysterious robbery was committed at the warehouse, and a large quantity of valuable property abstracted. It was in the late autumn, when the nights were long and drear, and everything favoured the enterprising burglar bent on daring exploits. I have referred to the robbery as being mysterious. It was mysterious in this way. Soon after the warehouse was opened, it was discovered that the goods in many of the departments had been overhauled and scattered about, and an investigation showed that whole pieces of print, stuffs, and silks had been carried off, besides bundles of handkerchiefs, Turkey red, and quantities of costly lace. A drawer in a desk had been burst open, and a small amount of petty cash taken. An attempt had also been made on the safe, as there were the marks of wedges, and a steel wedge broken off at the point was found on the floor, the broken portion being left in the safe, between the door and the framework. From this it seemed evident that the thieves had either not had time to complete their work, or had lacked the necessary appliances for forcing the mass of iron, and so had abandoned the attempt. But as it was, they had made a fine haul, as the stolen property was valued at about two thousand pounds, the silks being costly, while the rest of the goods were all of the finest quality. And herein the burglars showed a nice discrimination. All this was patent and clear, but now came the mystery—

how had the thieves effected an entrance into the premises? Not by any of the doorways, for the doors were all properly secured when the warehouse was opened, nor by any of the windows, for they also were intact.

At this time I was on the Manchester staff in a subordinate capacity, but it became my duty, in conjunction with some colleagues, to make an investigation with a view to tracking down the thieves. After we had carried out what we considered a very careful inspection of the premises, we were all as much in the dark as ever as to the mode of entrance and egress employed by the burglars. They had got in and got out, that was very certain; but how? It was truly a puzzle, and many were the theories that were started with a view to finding the solution. But they were all utterly impracticable and impossible, and only served to show how hopelessly at sea we were.

In accordance with an inborn habit of mine, when I felt mystified I held my peace, and made no suggestion one way or the other. But I pondered upon the subject a great deal, and I came to this conclusion. The thieves, or some of them, must have had a practical knowledge of the class of goods found in such a warehouse, because it was obvious that the inferior things had been rejected, and only those of high quality and value taken. In my own mind, therefore, I assumed from this that one at least of the criminals had been connected with the Manchester trade. Another point I felt decided about was that the robbery had been a very deliberately planned one, and considerable preparations must have been made for carrying it out by men who were no 'prentice hands at the burglar's calling.

Another mysterious thing was the means used for conveying the stolen goods away from the scene of operations. It was calculated that in the aggregate they must have weighed over two tons, and to carry off such a weight in the time at the disposal of the thieves argued some wheeled means of transport; and yet inquiries amongst the policemen who had been on night duty in the neighbourhood elicited the emphatic statement that they had neither seen nor heard anything during the night to arouse their suspicions. For me these facts had a certain significance, which I shall presently explain, and they subsequently gave me the clue which led to my solving the mystery and bringing the rascals to justice.

It is important I should state that amongst the goods stolen was a whole piece of magnificent brocaded silk of peculiar texture and richness, red and gold being the predominating colours. It was one of six pieces which had been manufactured to the order of an Indian Rajah, and they were to have been shipped that very week to Calcutta. Why the thieves had only taken one of the pieces was not very clear, for they were all together, and it was hardly possible they had overlooked the rest. It was likely enough they considered they would have great difficulty in finding a market for them, and so only took one as an experiment. But the fact of their having taken that one was to give me the clue I was so anxious to get, and that in a very strange way.

Of course all the ordinary means open to the police were taken to get on the track of the operators, and to arrest anybody who might attempt to traffic in the stolen property. But many days passed, and not the slightest trace had been obtained, and some fears

were expressed that the scoundrels would elude justice altogether.

The more I considered all the circumstances and details of the case, the more convinced I became that the robbery was the result of a long-thought-out and deliberate plan, and that the thieves had taken special precautions to have a safe hiding-place for the stolen goods. This seemed in the highest degree probable; otherwise, in face of the reward offered, and the extraordinary exertions made, we should have got some trace of the goods. Such a large quantity of stolen property could hardly have been placed in an ordinary house without arousing the suspicions of some one; therefore the deduction was that a number of persons were in the swim, and each person was so deeply involved and interested as to render it undesirable that he should "split on his pals." Otherwise the reward was sufficiently large to have proved an irresistible temptation to any one who could have shown clean hands.

For me the case possessed an absorbing interest. I was a young man ambitious of distinction and promotion, and so I analysed and sifted every scrap of evidence we had so far got, and began to work out a logical theory of the crime; and this led me to the idea that an entrance to the warehouse had been effected from the circus building, which, as I have explained, joined on to the gable of the permanent building. Having conceived this idea, it was a necessary sequence that I should deem it exceedingly probable that some of the *employés* of the circus were implicated. And the reason I thought so was this. Not only were there watchmen on the premises all night, but several of the stablemen and others slept in the stables.

The result of my cogitations was that in the character of a hanger-on, and a hard-up, out-of-work individual, I began to frequent the circus stables, and managed to play my part with such adroitness that I was not suspected. At this period there were not only a large number of horses, but two or three elephants, several goats, some performing dogs, two zebras, and a number of monkeys. Of course, all these animals required a great deal of attention, and gave occupation to a large number of men. It was absurd to suppose that every one of these individuals had a knowledge of the robbery, and so I directed my attention to trying to find out who had slept in the stable on the night of the robbery. I learned that there were a dozen individuals in all, including two boys. Very judiciously I began to talk occasionally to these people about the robbery, and to discuss with them the ways and means that had been used to abstract the goods from the warehouse. There was nothing, however, in the demeanour of the men calculated to arouse my suspicions, unless it was a seeming reluctance to speak of the matter. Nevertheless, I did not abandon my quest in this direction, for the more I thought of the subject the more it became a conviction with me that the robbery had taken place from the circus side. I was not prepared just then to even suggest a theory as to how it had been done, but I did feel as though I had struck a scent, and so I kept to it, hoping that some chance incident would give me a substantial clue. And so it came to pass one morning, as I went into the stables unusually early, I met a man who was known by the cognomen of "The Josser," but whose real name was Harry Pilchard. He was between forty and fifty years of age, with a rather morose expression, and what I may

describe as a wandering eye. He was what was known as a "stable hand," whose principal duty was to keep the stables clean and to look after the manure. As he came towards me I noticed that there was clinging to his trouser leg a long thread of bright-coloured, flossy-looking silk, which immediately struck me as being a most incongruous circumstance when taken in connection with the fellow's calling.

Let it be remembered that he had nothing whatever to do with the banners, trappings, or dresses of the establishment, which were kept in quite another part of the building; otherwise the thread of silk on his trousers might have been accounted for. As it was, it seemed to me like a handwriting on the wall; for, trifling as it was, I associated it with the silk that had been stolen from Fabermann, Weber & Company's place. I therefore turned my attention to trying to get possession of the thread without exciting the fellow's suspicions. The question was, how was it to be done?

I succeeded in drawing him into conversation, and at last a brilliant idea struck me. I knew that the Josser was a great smoker. Smoking, however, was strictly forbidden on the premises, on pain of instant dismissal. So I said to him, after a little conversation, "I've got some first-rate 'bacca, mate, if we could do a whiff anywhere."

"Blind me, if I can resist that!" exclaimed the Josser. "We'll do a smoke somehow. Come with me."

He led the way to the extreme end of the stable, where there was a large wooden compartment used as a storage room for sacks of corn, oats, beans, and other fodder, and, ensconcing ourselves between some of the sacks, we lit our pipes, and I was enabled, while his attention was riveted on his pipe, to draw the thread

of silk from his trousers, and wind it round my finger.

A little later I took this thread to Fabermann & Co., and showed it to them, and from its quality and substance they had no hesitation in saying that it was part of the tag end of the piece of silk that had been stolen from their premises. This was a discovery indeed, and I felt that I had struck a trail at last. That thread of silk, slender as it was, was to prove a powerful link, I was sure, and in my own mind I was absolutely convinced that the Josser knew something about the stolen goods. I therefore determined to stick to him, unless something convincing occurred to show me that I was wrong. The finding of that thread of silk was apparently confirmatory of my theory that the robbery had been committed by some of the circus hands. Then there was another point which I have already touched upon, which was the means by which the goods had been removed. Not the slightest evidence was forthcoming that a vehicle of any kind had been seen or heard in the street on the night of the robbery; and this caused it to dawn upon me that the stolen property had been taken to the circus, and removed from there subsequently, if it was not there still.

Acting upon this idea, I resolved by hook or by crook to make a thorough inspection of the premises, and so I took an opportunity of doing this. And now something began to attract my attention, owing to the channel in which my thoughts had flowed, which I had hitherto overlooked. At the gable end of the warehouse was an unusually thick water-spout, which went from the ground to the roof, and up the centre of the gable wall instead of at the corner, as is customary. Looking at this spout, I asked myself whether it wasn't possible for an

active and daring man to reach the roof by means of it. Assuming that it was possible, could an entrance be gained into the warehouse?

To solve this problem I went to the top story of the building. I had been there before, but nothing had aroused my suspicions. Now, however, a new light began to dawn upon me. The very top room of the warehouse was a sort of garret used for storing papers, boxes, labels, &c. It was a long room, going the whole length of the building. It was lighted by six windows; three in front looking into Portland Street, and three at the back, where there was a narrow thoroughfare used principally by the lorries in delivering goods and taking them away. Midway in the room, on the gable side, was a large fire-place, but in which there had not been a fire for a long time. Going down on my knees and looking up the chimney, I noted that the sky was distinctly visible, the chimney being almost straight, and of course very short, owing to the rooms being under the roof.

"Now," I thought to myself, "supposing that a man had gained the roof by means of the water-spout, could he have got into the room by coming down the chimney?" Granted that, and the rest seemed easy. The goods could have been conveyed from the lower departments to this room, and then by means of ropes passed down through the windows to confederates waiting in the back street.

I seemed to become quite fascinated with the theory I was working out, which presented itself to my mind as a singularly feasible one; and so I carefully inspected the windows, and there was distinct evidence that the middle one of the back three had recently been opened. All the others were thickly encrusted with dust and dirt, and cobwebs were spread over them like a network, but this

one was comparatively free, and, moreover, the hasp was left unfastened. There were also marks on the lower sash, which corresponded with those which a rope would have made. Having made these discoveries, which I kept to myself, I courted the society of the Josser again, and had the following conversation as I was standing with him just outside the stables. I cast my eye up the water-spout, and having gazed at it a little while I remarked—

"I wonder if any fellow could go up that spout?"

"You bet!" answered the Josser, in a curt way which was habitual with him.

"I don't believe it," I said.

"Why, I tell yer," growled the Josser, "that Nick Howie would do it."

Nick Howie was one of the stable hands: a big, burly, drunken fellow, whose arms and breasts I had noticed were much tattooed, which led me to suppose that he had been a sailor. So I asked the Josser if that was the case, and he said—

"Why, in course, Nick is an old shellback, and was a-sailing the salt waters nigh on to thirty years."

The links of the chain were lengthening now—I was sure of that, and the whole mode and plan of the robbery appeared to me as clear as daylight. That water-spout had been used as the means for gaining entrance to the warehouse. Once on the roof, to get down the chimney was an easy matter. My efforts were next directed to getting trace of the stolen goods. I was more than ever convinced that the Josser knew all about the robbery, and so it behoved me to be careful not to arouse his suspicions, for he was a wary old dog in some respects, and had he suspected me, my plans might have been frustrated.

For the next few days I made no progress in my attempts to unravel the skein and get at the right threads. But towards the end of the week following my conversation with the Josser about the water-spout, I got an opportunity to go alone to the fodder store at the end of the stable, and then I began a thorough search on the supposition that the stolen goods were stored there, as it presented every facility as a hiding-place. I prowled about for some time without any result, and had almost given it up, when, getting down behind some sacks of fodder in one corner of the building, I began to grope with my hands, for it was too dark to see anything, and I felt what seemed to me like a bundle of soft goods. Striking a wax vesta, I was enabled to determine that the bundle consisted of pieces of Turkey red, and thus the problem was solved at last. Here was the hiding-place of the stolen property. Delighted with my discovery and success, I got out as soon as possible, but before springing the mine I had prepared, I got the name of every man who was on the circus premises during the night of the robbery. And that done, I sought the assistance of a strong body of police, and all being ready, we swooped down and arrested the whole lot, including the Josser and Nick Howie. Their amazement and discomfiture may be better imagined than described, and both Nick and the Josser indulged in language that was sulphurous, and asseverated with many oaths that they knew nothing about the robbery. But another unpleasant surprise was in store for them when I directed that the sacks of fodder should be removed; and on this being done, we brought to light most of the stolen goods, including the piece of silk. Some of the more ordinary things had been traded away, but

the bulk, and most valuable part, of the property was there.

When the fellows saw that the game was up they began, after the manner of their kind, to put the blame upon each other. Their accusations led to the plot being gradually revealed, and it was in due course proved that the theory I had worked out was the correct one. Nick Howie had mounted to the roof by means of the water-spout, taking ropes with him. Then he had lowered a rope, and thus enabled two others to follow his example. They got down the chimney, and passed the stolen things to their confederates, who waited in the back street, and who at once conveyed them to their hiding-place.

By the subsequent confession of one of the rascals, it was ascertained that the idea of the robbery was first conceived by Nick Howie, who, during the erection of the circus building, went with a number of other men on to the roof of the warehouse, by permission of the proprietors, to temporarily fix some guy ropes to hold portions of the scaffolding required. He then formulated his plan of the robbery, and took some of his companions into his confidence. It was thereupon resolved to carry the exploit out. While overhauling the goods in the warehouse they were tempted to take all the pieces of silk, but this was subsequently resisted, as they saw there would be great difficulty in disposing of it. But they decided to take one piece, in the hope that in the course of time they might sell it in small lengths to some of the ladies of the circus troupe. It was a foolish and stupid idea, and was to prove the means of their undoing. On the day that the fatal thread of silk clung to the Josser's trousers,—which gave me the first practical clue,—he had been examining the goods,

in company with Nick Howie, with a view to determining what it would be safe to take away in order to raise money. But for that tell-tale thread, the possibilities are, they might have escaped detection. As it was, the whole gang, numbering twelve persons, who had been in the swim, were duly tried, and, being convicted, were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

HOW THE BANK WAS SAVED.

One night in mid December I had for the nonce assumed the character of a tramp, and was prowling about amongst some of the slums of South London trying to lay my hands on a notorious rascal who was very much wanted in connection with a daring burglary in Ireland. The fellow was known to have crossed the Channel, and was supposed to be lurking somewhere on the southern side of the Thames. I had tried for several nights to get on his track, but failed, probably because he was not in London at all. Although I did not find my man in this particular case, I was the means of dishing as extraordinary a plot for robbing a bank as was ever concocted. And this is how it came about.

There used to stand over in the Borough, in a thoroughfare that during the past few years has been almost entirely cleared of its rookeries, a well-known tramps' house, or "dossing-ken," as it was called amongst the fraternity of scoundrels. Perhaps I need scarcely remark here that the word "tramp" usually covers a multitude of sins, and though honestly-disposed people do sometimes roam about the country in search of a "straight living," the *genus* tramp is, as a rule, a rascal of the deepest dye. He hates honest work, but will turn his hand to anything that will enable him to appropriate other men's goods. In the so-called tramps' houses, therefore, there is usually to be found a very choice collection of scoundrelism of all shades, from the

beardless tyro to the grizzled hero—save the mark!—of a score of imprisonments for law-breaking. The detective who knows his business will make himself acquainted with these dossing-houses, not in his capacity of a detective, mind you, for that would be to spoil his own game, but he must mix amongst the *habitués* as one of them. He must know their argot, their ways and habits, and be able to play his part so well as to thoroughly deceive them.

It is not a very pleasant duty, but duty is duty, and has to be carried out, pleasant or unpleasant. Of course, it is not every man who can successfully assume the *rôle* of the pseudo-tramp, for it requires not only a combination of qualities, but a course of study to enable one to thoroughly understand the ways of rascaldom.

On the occasion I speak of I had repaired to the ken in the Borough, intending to pass the night there. When I first entered the place it was pretty early in the evening, and there were very few lodgers in, notwithstanding that it was a cold and bitter night. But four men and a youth were seated in one corner of the large room, which was warmed by an open brazier of burning coke. Amongst these men I recognized an old gaol-bird whose real name was Jack Pearson, but who was known to his pals as "The Raven," possibly on account of his swarthiness and his black hair and eyes. He and his companions were in close conversation when I entered, and from the fact of the Raven being there, and all of them being in such close confab, I felt sure that there was mischief brewing, so I determined to keep my ears open.

The fellows scrutinized me very keenly as I entered. Beyond a surly greeting, however, in the style peculiar to the tramp, I took no notice of them, but crouched

near the coke fire, and pretended to fall asleep. It was impossible from where I sat to hear much or anything of their conversation, save a word now and again which carried no meaning with it; but after a time I did manage to catch this sentence from the lips of the Raven—

"Well, pals, the job will 'ave to be done afore the winter's over, and the sooner we get to work the better."

"So, so!" I thought to myself, "that means business, and I shall keep a very sharp eye on you, Mr. Jack Pearson."

It was not difficult for me to determine that the "job" he spoke of was a robbery of some kind, and it was evident to me that they had spotted a place that they were going to exercise their talent upon; but little did I think that a scheme had been worked out which, if they had succeeded in carrying it to a successful issue, would have placed them in possession of many thousands of pounds; but I was destined to frustrate their plan, owing to that sentence that reached my ears in the dossing-ken. Three days later I followed the Raven down to a little place in Hampshire, which I will call Beechtown. He had so far changed his appearance that he might have been taken for a respectable tradesman or a mechanic. He had invested in a new suit of clothes, which indicated that he had some capital at his disposal. I soon ascertained that the three other men and the youth who were with him on the night I passed in the tramps' house in the Borough were already in the town, so it was unmistakable that there was some very serious business on hand. But it was some little time before I was enabled to define accurately what the business was.

Of course my plan was to endeavour to take them *in flagrante delicto*, and any premature movement on my part would only have served to alarm them, and defeat the ends of justice. I therefore waited and watched patiently.

Beechtown was a quiet, sleepy little place, which woke up to bustle and activity every Wednesday, which was market day. Then the country folk from many miles around poured into the town with their produce, and, pitching their stalls about the quaint, red-bricked Town Hall, which stood in the chief square, they chaffered, and gossiped, and traded until a late hour at night. That day was always a very busy day for the County Bank, which stood in the High Street, and had the reputation of being one of the most flourishing of country banks, for it had the support of all the county families and gentry in the district. The bank building was an old-fashioned structure, and had once been an hotel, though on its conversion it had undergone some modification to adapt it to the requirements of banking business. The cellars had all been concreted and the walls cemented; and as they were used for storing valuables and large sums of money, every precaution that could be thought of had been taken to render them burglar-proof, though, as a matter of fact, burglary was almost entirely unknown in Beechtown. Indeed, I was informed by the Chief Superintendent of the police that there had not been a serious case of robbery there for over forty years.

Although I was perfectly certain in my own mind that the Raven and his companion rascals were bent on changing that Arcadian state of matters if they could, I did not imagine that they were going to fly at such high game as the bank. But I soon began to perceive that there was something extraordinary in the wind.

Next to the bank was a house and shop, which had been for a considerable time untenanted, but which was now in the occupation of a man who styled himself Harold Waters, and who was the proprietor of a collection of waxworks, which, according to the glaring announcement outside, was "The Finest Collection of Waxworks ever brought together," and had been "Pronounced by the entire Press of the United Kingdom as unique." This wonderful collection consisted of a few effigies of notorious criminals, and "A Portrait Group," very dirty and much battered and faded, of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, surrounded by their children.

My interest in the show arose from the discovery I made that the Raven and Mr. Harold Waters were hand and glove together, and that the Raven occupied one of the upper rooms of the building. And the Raven's companions, two of whom lived in a public-house and two in a low lodging in the town, were in the habit of repairing to the shop every night after the show had closed. There was also a Mrs. Waters, a very stout, coarse-looking being, who used to tout at the door for custom, and take the money from the few simple yokels who, lured by the announcements, paid their twopence to see "The Finest Collection of Waxworks ever brought together."

It was, of course, as clear as daylight now that the waxworks proprietor and his wife were consorting with the fellows from London with a view to committing a burglary, but it did not strike me at first that their designs were on the bank. But one night I saw the Raven and a companion go in carrying between them two picks and two shovels; and then it flashed upon me that they were engaged in a desperate attempt to break

into the bank. It was a bold scheme, and, notwithstanding the innumerable risks to be run, there were strong chances in favour of the burglars being successful, had it not been that I had overheard that sentence in the dossing-ken in London.

My first step was to endeavour to find out the plan of operation without arousing the suspicions of the enterprising rascals. Necessarily that was difficult. But on Saturday evening, when the show was pretty full, I paid my twopence with the rest, and by a little manœuvring I managed to get into the passage, where there was a flight of stairs that led down to the cellars, and, descending, I found in the front cellar a heap of dirt that had been dug up, together with a number of tools, such as pickaxes, shovels, crow-bars, &c. These things spoke for themselves. The plan evidently was to make a hole through the division wall, and thus get into the bank cellars. Armed with this knowledge, my course was clear, and I managed to regain the shop without any one being aware that I had succeeded in inspecting the enemies' works.

The following day I waited on the bank manager, and in a private interview I had with him I made known who I was, and told him of my discovery. Of course he was greatly alarmed, and he counselled arresting all the rascals immediately; but I pointed out to him that this would defeat our ends, as no robbery had yet been committed, and though the fellows might be convicted as suspicious characters they would at the most get but a few months' imprisonment, whereas if we allowed them to enter the bank cellars, and took them red-handed, as it were, they would get long terms of penal servitude, and the country would for a time be rid of a very dangerous band of malefactors. "Give

them rope enough," I said, "and they will hang themselves." He fell in, of course, with my views, and accorded me *carte blanche* to do whatever I thought was right.

My next step was to carefully inspect the bank cellars in company with the manager. As I have mentioned, the house had formerly been an hotel, and the cellars were therefore extensive, and in order to meet the requirements of the bank they had been enlarged and extended, for an additional house had been purchased, and the cellars connected with the cellars of the bank. They had been arched with brickwork, the walls strengthened and cemented, and the floors concreted. One cellar had been specially fitted up as a strong-room, and was shut off from the rest by a stout iron railing; the iron bars being firmly embedded in the brickwork of the roof on the one hand, and in the concrete of the floor on the other. Other precautions had also been taken for the safeguarding of the valuables and the specie; but I saw at once that if two or three desperate and experienced burglars could manage to spend a few hours of several nights in the cellars they would, in spite of precautions, succeed in obtaining a large amount of booty. I knew that the Raven was not only a most desperate character, but he was by trade a mechanic, and in the present instance his mechanical knowledge would serve him in good stead. Inferentially I came to the conclusion that this ruffian had been planning out the robbery for some time, and must by some means have gained a knowledge of the bank cellars. How he came to ally himself with Harold Waters and his wife I had yet to learn. What was unmistakable was that they were all in the swim, and the plan of operations was to effect a communica-

tion with the bank by breaking through the partition wall.

Of course I had made known the state of matters to the Chief Superintendent of police, and he placed four of his best men at my disposal. Our plan was to conceal ourselves in the cellars of the bank at night. It was not a pleasant vigil, for the weather was very cold; but we stuck to our posts, and I felt sure that a very crushing defeat was in store for the Raven and his associates. I concluded that, unless they were greater fools than I gave them credit for being, they would make their attempt between the hours of the closing of the bank on a Saturday and its re-opening on Monday morning. That would give them a pretty long spell, and they would be able to accomplish a great deal.

For several nights, as we watched and waited, we heard the sounds of pickaxe and shovel; but still there were no signs of a wall being broken through. Then there were indications of a cessation of the work from some cause or other. Though we listened intently we heard nothing. This astonished me, and I began to fear the fellows had funked and abandoned the enterprise. I resolved, therefore, to take steps to find out what was being done. I had already learnt that Harold Waters and his wife were in the habit of repairing at night to a public-house in a low quarter of the town, after they had closed their show, and that both of them were much given to beer-drinking, and would frequently return to their home in a very muddled state.

I therefore assumed the character of a tramp once more, and patronized this public-house for a night or two, and managed to scrape acquaintance with Waters and the missus; and, representing myself as being in a state

of hopeless impecuniosity, I asked them if they could give me a job about their show.

"Lor' bless you, master," answered the woman, "the blooming show don't turn over enough dibs for that. We ain't a-doing much business. These yer waxworks is a-played out now. They've been a-worked to death. I want my old man to make this his last pitch, and then sell the blooming figgers and a-emigrate, or summat."

I expressed my deep sympathy with them, and bewailed the hard lot of poor people; and having traded on her feelings, I said—

"Look here, missus, I'm awfully down on my luck, and if you'll give me a doss for a few nights I'll keep the place clean, or do anything you like."

"Can't do it, governor," she replied; "we've got a covey already living with us."

The husband here chimed in. He was pretty well muddled, and appeared to have been nodding over his pipe, but he mumbled out—

"Couldn't we give the chap a doss for a night or two while Jack's away?"

"No, you fool!" growled the woman.

"Who is Jack?" I asked, with an air of innocence.

"He's our lodger," hiccoughed the man.

"Where has he gone to?"

"He's gone to Lunnon," Waters replied.

This caused the missus to become angry. She evidently had caution more largely developed than he had, and she exclaimed warmly—

"Shut up, you fool! What's it got to do with this bloke where Jack is?"

I did not deem it advisable to pursue the subject further, lest I might arouse their suspicions. I had

learnt one valuable piece of information, which was that the Raven had gone to London for some reason, and operations were suspended during his absence. My surmise was that he had gone for more tools, or else, perhaps, to enlist the services of some other of his acquaintances, though I hardly thought that likely, for there were already seven men in the swim, and they were quite capable of carrying out the work.

After that I watched every London train that came in, and on the Thursday afternoon I saw the Raven alight from the down train from town. He had with him one of those long carpet-bags which cricketers carry their bats in, and that convinced me that I was right in my surmise that he had been for more tools. The bag, I was sure, was full of tools necessary for the work he had set himself to do, and which he could not have bought in Beechtown without running the risk of arousing suspicion.

That night during our vigil we heard no sounds indicative of operations being resumed; but on Friday the enemy became very active, and we heard hammer and chisel being used on the wall. Intuitively I guessed that all was being prepared for the grand coup on Saturday night, and the burglars were no doubt congratulating themselves that they would have nearly thirty clear hours, if not more, for their labours, without the slightest danger of being disturbed. But as expert cracksmen, they would find twelve hours ample, no doubt, and that would afford them a fair margin to restore the broken wall as nearly as possible to its normal condition, and to clear out of the town before the robbery was discovered: though how they could hope to escape altogether was just one of those mysteries that only the criminal mind could explain.

If the Raven had only argued the matter out with himself he must have seen that when it was found—as found it must be—that the partition-wall had been broken through, suspicion would at once fall upon the occupiers of the shop—that is, on Waters and his wife; and in those suspicions, their pretended lodger—the Raven himself—would be involved. But the professional criminal is ever fatuous, and the rascal no doubt thought he could slip clear away with his companions before the hue and cry became hot. In such cases as these it is each man for himself, and having given them their share of the swag, the Raven would not concern himself much as to what became of them, but would endeavour to secure his own safety.

As I now felt sure the final effort would be made that Saturday night, after the waxworks show had shut up, I applied for a large contingent of local police in plain clothes, and a strong body of them surrounded the house, but remained in concealment, whilst my force in the cellar was augmented by another two men.

As we kept our vigil, signs of the enemies' activity were very marked, and about one o'clock we became aware that a breach had been made in the wall, for we saw a long gleam of thread-like light shoot athwart the cellar. The fellows worked hard and quickly now, and presently the hole was so enlarged that the youth crawled through, and tools were handed to him so that he might make it still larger. This was done. Then the Raven himself crawled in, and the large bag I had seen in his possession at the station was passed through; then a third man followed, and a lantern was handed through the hole, and a fourth man joined the burglars. The Raven opened the bag, revealing all sorts of tools, including saws for sawing iron bars, chisels,

pick-locks, two crowbars, files, and a powerful pair of pincers with very long handles, so that enormous leverage was secured. The fellows at once set to work upon the iron bars of which I have already spoken; and from the way the Raven was prepared with tools for this, I felt sure he was well acquainted with the arrangement of the cellars; but how he got that knowledge was a mystery then.

The moment had now arrived for the counter move on our part. We had been carefully concealed in a small cellar which had been used for storing cancelled cheques. This was shut off from the other part by a wooden door, in which we had drilled a hole so that we could see without being seen. Giving the preconcerted signal, I flung open the door, and we fell upon the robbers. Their fright and surprise deprived them apparently of the power of thought or action, and before they could recover themselves we had them handcuffed. But the Raven did make a struggle for liberty, though it was all useless. Word had already been passed to the men lying in wait outside, and they effected an entrance into the house and seized the rest of the conspirators. We thus made a clean haul of the whole band, including the woman, and in less than half an hour we had them all safely lodged in the police station. Rarely had a band of malefactors been checkmated so completely in the very moment of their supposed triumph as these had, and their discomfiture was correspondingly great, for it was clear they had never dreamed of defeat.

They were all duly committed for trial, but before that came off I had managed to get on the track of another fellow who had kept in the background. This was a man who had formerly been a porter in the bank, but who had been dismissed for some irregularity. He

had fallen into evil ways, and had made the acquaintance of the Raven, whom he supplied with a plan of the cellars. Mrs. Waters proved to be the half-sister of one of the gang. The whole plan of the robbery had been carefully thought out, and it was considered "a safe thing," as the fraternity term it, when Waters was able to rent the shop next the bank for his waxworks show.

Owing to the Raven's previous convictions he was sentenced to penal servitude for life. The others got varying sentences, the woman being let off with twelve months. Thus we got rid of a very dangerous gang, and I was very highly complimented on the way I had managed to save the bank.

THE BARNFIELD MURDER CASE.

If any one looks on a map, or in a railway guide, under the expectation of finding Barnfield, he will certainly be disappointed, for Barnfield is not a station, a town, a village, nor a hamlet. But those people who are old enough to let their memories travel back a generation ago will remember how prominently at that time Barnfield figured before the public eye as being the scene of a somewhat mysterious tragedy, which proved something more than a nine days' wonder. Barnfield, in short, was and is an extensive farm situated in Hampshire on the confines of the New Forest, and commanding from the elevated parts of the grounds that truly magnificent panorama which embraces on the one hand the far distant Needles, on the other the picturesque shores and town of Southampton, and opposite that beautiful stretch of delightful country where, embosomed amongst stately trees, is the grand old ruin of Netley Abbey. Thirty years back Barnfield was a lonely and isolated spot, and though at the present day it is within earshot of the railway whistle, and a new highway runs within a quarter of a mile of it, an air of solitude and loneliness still hangs over it. It was but last summer, while wandering in the neighbourhood on pleasure bent, that I renewed my acquaintance with the spot, where so long ago I was engaged in investigating the dark crime which seemed to bring a blight upon the place. For it is a singular fact that since the murder the farm

has never prospered. Bad season after bad season has served to ruin the unfortunate tenants who have tried to turn its luck. Since the tragedy the place has been in possession of three different families. The present tenant has been almost ruined by pleuro amongst his cattle, and twice in succession he has suffered very heavy loss owing to the destruction by fire of a large number of valuable stacks of hay. And last summer he told me, with tears in his eyes, that though getting an old man, he intended to emigrate with his family and try his luck in far distant New Zealand. "For you know, mister," he added pathetically, "there be blood on this plaäce, and noäwt that I can doä will get rid on it. It's loike as if th' plaäce wur curst, and it will have to be razed to th' ground wi' fire before th' evil spirit leaves it."

As I glanced round and noted the changed appearance of everything since I first knew Barnfield, I could not help feeling that something had certainly affected it, and it was painfully obvious that the sun of prosperity had failed to shine upon it for a very long time.

The story of the murder is this. The farm at the time was in the occupation of Oliver Cudthorpe, who in many respects was a typical Hampshire yeoman—Hampshire yeomen have ever been noted for their sturdiness, their independence, and that generous and true-hearted hospitality which is part of the nature of the English South-countrymen. Oliver came from a race of yeomen, and Barnfield had been farmed by three generations of his family. At the period of his occupation, Barnfield embraced an area of close on 1,500 acres, and it was accounted one of the most prosperous farms in that part of the kingdom. The land was singularly rich, and a succession of bounteous harvests filled the

tenants' coffers, and gladdened the ground landlord's heart; while the Barnfield cattle and sheep always fetched the top price in the market.

Oliver Cudthorpe's life had been uneventful in the sense that is generally understood by the expression. But he had had his little romance, which I must tell, as it has a bearing on the tragedy. As a young man he had wooed and won the youngest daughter of a well-to-do Southampton tradesman, by the name of Linton, who had a large family. Fanny, who became Cudthorpe's wife, had the misfortune to be a remarkably pretty girl. It would not have been a misfortune if she had possessed brains, but she was a fickle, flighty girl, too fond of pleasure and homage, and impressed apparently with the idea that she ought to be a great lady. Having regard to this, it may seem strange that she consented to become the wife of a farmer. But it is highly probable that she was entirely ignorant of what her position as a farmer's wife would be; and, knowing that Cudthorpe was prosperous, she may have supposed she would have a fine time of it, and do as she liked.

From all that I have been able to gather, her dream was soon dispelled, and she began to find the isolation of a country life intolerable. She took no interest in her husband's affairs, and was constantly grumbling and sighing for the gaiety of town existence. Cudthorpe, it would seem, was very fond of her, and tried all in his power to make her happy. The marriage proved a childless one, and after four years of wedded life no offspring had come to bless the union. It may be that this fact tended to make the young wife more restless and dissatisfied with her lot, and it became notorious around the country side that domestic affairs up at Barnfield did not flow smoothly.

It chanced one summer that some military operations were being carried on in the neighbourhood in connection with the ordnance survey, and Cudthorpe was asked to afford accommodation for a few weeks to two young officers engaged in the survey, one of them being a lieutenant. In an evil moment the farmer consented to this, thinking it would afford a change for his wife. And at first all seemed to go well. But when six weeks had passed the farmer had reason to think that his wife and the lieutenant had become too familiar, and he ordered him to leave the house. This caused a scene between the wife and her husband, and about the end of the summer the young wife disappeared from her home. At first Cudthorpe was bowed down with grief, but when in the course of time things came to his knowledge which made it too evident that the guilty woman had gone off with her soldier lover, the deceived husband is said to have become furious, and uttered maledictions upon her. Then for over two years her name was a dead letter in his family, and no one would have dared to utter it in his hearing for fear of incurring his wrath.

Time at last brought him his revenge. Cast off by her faithless and worthless lover, she crept back to her husband's home penitent and broken-hearted, but the man was stern and unforgiving. She had had no pity for him; why should he have any for her? He had done everything he could to make her happy, and she had repaid him with baseness, and had dishonoured his name and bed. Why, then, should he show her mercy? Such would seem to have been his feelings, for he turned her from his door with a curse. She wandered away, and two days later her dead body was found in a pond in one of the fields in Barnfield. She had committed suicide. Lying on a flat stone near the

pond, with another stone on the top to keep it from blowing away, was a half-sheet of paper, on which the unhappy woman had written in pencil—

"My death shall be avenged."

She must have died with strange notions as to what she was entitled to if she thought that the taking of her own life, which she had blighted and blasted, was to be signalized by an act of vengeance.

From the time that the body was discovered Mr. Cudthorpe became a changed man. He grew morose and sullen, and seemed to take no interest in anything. The sunshine of his life had been darkened for ever, and it was said about the country that he was never again known to smile. He had been badly treated, cruelly deceived, and shamefully wronged; but there was good reason to believe that he was strongly impressed with the idea that he had been harsh to his erring wife, whom he had doted upon; and folk said they were sure if she had not destroyed herself, but had gone to him a second time, he would have taken her to his heart again and have forgiven her. Be that as it may, he sorrowed in silence and became a gloomy man. Such was the sorrowful story, and it begot him the sympathy of every one who knew him, for it was a tradition that he had been an exceptionally tender and devoted husband, and the wife had repaid it all by inflicting upon him the cruellest and deadliest wrong a woman can put upon a man; and even those who were disposed to be most lenient found little to say in extenuation of her fault, or in her favour.

From that dark day when the frail woman's body was dragged from the pond to the tragedy that made me acquainted with the story fifteen years elasped. Harvest time came and went. The autumns smiled with

their wealth of fruit, prosperity shone on Cudthorpe, and he was said to be growing rich. But he still externally remained the same gloomy man. He had, however, found some compensation for his wrong and loss. Three years after his wife's death he had adopted the orphan lad of a neighbouring farmer, who had met with a sudden end through being gored by a bull. Cudthorpe had taken the youth—then eleven years of age—and the young fellow, whose name was William, and who, by his foster-father's request, adopted the name of Cudthorpe, honoured him as a father, and returned him all the affection of a true son. Of course it was generally understood that on the old man's death William would succeed to the property; and as he was known to be a very steady and praiseworthy young fellow, a bright and happy future was predicted for him, notwithstanding that it was an open secret that Cudthorpe had made him vow that he would never marry.

One day Oliver Cudthorpe crossed over to Southampton, to attend a cattle show that was being held in the town. He had distinctly stated, on leaving his home in the morning, that he would be back in the evening; but night came, and he had not returned. No uneasiness, however, was felt, although it was unusual for him to remain away all night. But early the next morning, when the farm hands rose to go to their labours, they were amazed to observe Cudthorpe's horse, which he had ridden the day before, standing at the gate that led into the stable yard. It was covered with mud, as if it had been galloping across the country. It had been raining for some days, and the roads and fields were swampy. The horse had been a favourite one of Cudthorpe's, he had ridden it for years, and it seemed

to express, by its looks and manner, that something terrible had happened.

An alarm was at once raised, and search parties set off to look for the missing man. It was a natural thought that an accident had happened. Perhaps the farmer had been seized with a fit, and had died on the way. And from the fact of the horse having returned, it was concluded that Mr. Cudthorpe's body, if he were dead, would be found not far away. From the farm, a path ran for nearly half a mile, first through a field, then through a copse, finally through a lane to an oak fence that was the boundary line of the farm estate on that side, and the lane was entered by a gateway from the highroad.

The whole of this route was gone over without any discovery being made. Then information was carried about the country side, and inquiries instituted, with the result that the news spread like wild-fire, and neighbours gathered from far and near. At last some one sharper than the rest occupied himself with examining the ground between the gateway and the farm; because, he argued, the horse could not have got in if the gate had been shut; and as it was found shut on the first search, the inference was that Mr. Cudthorpe had passed through the gateway from the highroad. The examination resulted in finding what was unmistakably a little pool of blood on the turfy pathway that ran through the copse. This put a new complexion on the affair, and pointed to a crime rather than an accident; because, if an accident, where was Cudthorpe?

Presently indications were observed that something heavy had been dragged from where the blood was through the ferns and moss of the copse. There was a distinct trail, and blood was noticed on some of the

ferns. The trail was followed until a pond was reached—the very pond in which the erring Mrs. Cudthorpe had committed suicide fifteen years before. Appliances were at once procured for dragging the pond, which was deep and rather large, and in a short time, to the horror of every one present, Farmer Cudthorpe's body was brought to the surface. The simple country folk were puzzled to understand what this meant. It was clear enough, of course, that poor Cudthorpe was dead; but if his horse had thrown him in the copse, or he had tumbled off through being seized with a fit, how did his body come into the water?

A consideration of this fact needed no very erudite power of reasoning to determine that the man's death was the result of crime, not accident.

Amidst deep expressions of regret the body was borne to the farm, and carried in the first instance into an outbuilding till the sodden and muddy garments could be removed. It was then noted that the heavy and antiquated repeater watch, with its massive seals and pendants, which Cudthorpe always wore, was still on the body, and when his pockets were searched a considerable sum of money in bank-notes, preserved from the wet by a leather case, was found, but not a coin of any kind was in his pockets. The notes and the watch being there seemed to indicate that he had not been robbed. A little later, when his clothes were being removed, it was observed with horror that there was a wound from which blood was still oozing on the top of the chest, just where it joins the lower part of the throat. There could now no longer be a doubt that a crime had been committed, and William Cudthorpe immediately despatched messengers for a doctor and the police.

The doctor came, and, after a careful examination of the body, he announced that death was due to a gun-shot wound. The bullet had entered the gullet, cutting through the upper branches of the bronchial tube and some of the large veins, and had then passed out through the left side of the back part of the neck. The unfortunate man must have died very quickly, and had bled a great deal. The doctor also stated that Cudthorpe was dead before he was thrown into the water.

It was now painfully evident that a strange and mysterious crime had been committed. But they had the deed before them, and who had done it? It was hardly likely it was any one in the neighbourhood, for the farmer had been universally respected, and not a soul could be pointed to as having borne him any ill-will.

It chanced that at this time a relative of mine was connected in an official capacity with the county police, and he requested that I should be asked to go down from London, and see if I could unravel the apparent mystery. I readily complied with the request, and on my arrival I felt it necessary to inquire into Mr. Cudthorpe's mode of life and antecedents. Of course I soon learnt the story of his wife's frailty and self-sought death. It was common property in the district, and every one knew it. But it did not seem to me then to have the slightest bearing on Cudthorpe's violent death.

Pursuing my inquiries farther afield, I ascertained that when he left Southampton for his house he was known to have a considerable sum of money in gold and silver on his person. Several witnesses testified to this, including the keeper of a tavern who knew him well,

and at whose house he had partaken of some bread and cheese and ale preparatory to leaving for Barnfield. This fact seemed to point to robbery as the motive for the crime. The murderer had taken the coin, but had left the watch and notes as being likely to betray him.

After this, my next move was to try and find out if any one had been known to purchase a gun in Southampton about the time of the murder. But I could not get any information to that effect. Then it occurred to me to search about the scene of the crime, as there was a probability that the murderer might have thrown the weapon away. Nothing resulted from the search, however, and then I thought I would have the pond dragged. And after two days' work we fished up an old musket bearing the Tower mark, and date 1836. This, then, was the weapon with which the foul deed had been done; and in it I was sanguine I had a powerful clue that would enable me to run the criminal down.

The possession of a gun of that kind must have been known to others besides the possessor himself, and so I had a strong belief that it would prove the key to solving the mystery. Week after week, however, went by, and brought us no nearer the solution. But at last it came to my knowledge that the gun had been stolen from the armoury of a militia regiment in Southampton, though up to then it had not been missed. My next course was to try and find out who was likely to have opportunities of stealing the gun, and suspicion fastened on a young man who for some days had been seen hanging about the dépôt of the regiment. He was described as being about seventeen or eighteen years of age, rather tall, thin and sickly in appearance, and looking as if he had gone

through a great deal of hardship. An old army pensioner was in charge of the place, and to him the young fellow had stated that he was in great poverty, whereupon the pensioner had given him food and allowed him to sleep a couple of nights on the premises.

Even with this information to go upon, it seemed reasonable to assume that the young man was the criminal.

Then a curious question suggested itself to me.

Why did he select Mr. Cudthorpe as his victim, and shoot him down on his own estate? This question brought to my mind the story I had heard about Mrs. Cudthorpe having left a piece of paper behind her when she committed suicide, on which she had written, "My death shall be avenged." Was this crime an act of vengeance? Somehow it seemed to me, when I considered all the circumstances, that it was.

Following up the clue I had got, I succeeded in tracing the young man to Salisbury, where a fair was being held. And I found him at last in company with some soldiers, drinking in a tavern. He was a wretched, starved, miserable-looking creature, with a hunted, scared look in his pale face. As I arrested him he sighed and murmured—

"I am glad."

"Of what?" I asked.

"That you have taken me, for I was going mad with the burden of my secret. But I killed him in order to avenge my mother, and because he would not help me."

These words were a revelation, and soon the sad truth was known. The murderer was the illegitimate son of Mrs. Cudthorpe, his father being the lover with whom she fled. The lad had been brought up by a female relative of Mrs. Cudthorpe, who had preserved the secret

of his existence, but she was weak enough to tell him the story of his mother's shame and suicide, and how she had left a paper saying her death would be avenged. That seems to have sunk into the boy's mind, and he dwelt upon it night and day. At last his guardian died, and he was left to his own resources. But he could get no one to own him and no one to help him. Then it occurred to him to write to Mr. Cudthorpe, making known who he was, and solicit help from him. Cudthorpe, however, took no notice of the letters, and kept the existence of his guilty wife's son a secret from every one as far as he was concerned. At last the wretched youth resolved to kill him. He stole the gun, and lay in wait for his victim in the copse, where he shot him down, and, by dint of extraordinary physical exertion, dragged the dead man to the pond, as he wished to throw his body into the same place where his mother had committed suicide.

Such was the sad and pitiable story of sorrow and shame which a woman's frailty was responsible for. Little could Fanny Cudthorpe have dreamed what the result would be when she listened to the lying words of her false and villainous lover, for whose sake she had abandoned home, friends, honour, husband—everything that an upright woman should most treasure.

The unhappy youth, who had thus deprived his mother's husband of his life, was duly tried and sentenced to death. But an agitation was got up in his favour, and his sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. It would have been more merciful, however, to have carried out the original sentence of the law, for at his age penal servitude for life was fraught with horrors, compared with which death would have been a merciful release.

THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS FAIRY.

Signorina Veronica Tortolini was the fairy queen and *première danseuse* in the pantomime at the Great Novelty Theatre, London. Mademoiselle was an Italian, and had come over to England with her parents, who set out for London as for El Dorado. Signor Tortolini at once commenced business as an itinerant ice-cream vendor, and his wife supplemented the income by grinding an organ which she wheeled about on a hand-cart. Veronica was then an infant, and her early years were passed in a basket attached to the hand-cart on which the organ was placed. Here in fair weather and foul she slept or whimpered, as the case might be, for sometimes fourteen or fifteen hours out of the twenty-four. The remaining hours of the day were passed with her parents in the squalid fetidness of a den on Saffron Hill. In spite of these disadvantages, of London grime and fog, of the squalor and misery of her home, she grew in beauty, and when she was about ten or eleven her parents clothed her in a picturesque Italian garb, and sent her forth to sell flowers in the London streets, and she took up her station on the pavement of the Royal Exchange. Her natural grace, her undoubted good looks, and her symmetrical figure attracted a great deal of attention, and for a time she drove a thriving trade. Her competitors, however, the typical London flower-girls, who are the most foul-mouthed and unpicturesque creatures to be found

in all Europe, became jealous of her; and they led her such a life, and were so unkind and cruel, that often and often poor little forlorn Veronica returned to her wretched home weeping bitterly, and as often did she refuse to go out again to sell her flowers. But then her father thrashed her with a strap, for he could not bear the idea of losing the money she was in the habit of bringing home, and she had to go forth once more to bear the jeers, the taunts, and the ill-usage of her jealous competitors.

Thus her life was passed until she was about thirteen. It was a bitter life—a life of the London streets; a life in which she had to hold her own against long odds; a life in which she experienced no sympathy, no tenderness; a life that was hard, terrible, and bitter. Her parents regarded her as a money-getting medium, and nothing else. If she failed to get money, they thrashed her and drove her from the house, threatening her with dreadful consequences unless she procured the money for which they craved; for money was their aim, their creed, their god.

When the girl was about thirteen she was far in advance of her years. She ought still to have been a child, but instead of that she was a woman, who had come to look upon existence as a terrible sort of thing; and she often wondered why God had made her. But at last a change came. It chanced one day that an Italian ballet-master noticed her. He was in London on business in connection with his calling, and being struck with her beauty and her grace as she stood in a drizzling rain offering her flowers to the passers-by, he accosted her, and asked her if she would like to learn to dance—if she would like to go to Italy, and be trained for the theatre. The question seemed to her to open

up the prospects of heaven, and with an eagerness begotten by the unutterable misery of her position, she said she would go anywhere, do anything, so long as she could get away from London. The man who had spoken to her was the well-known ballet-master, Signor Pellegrini Egéro, who was then attached to La Scala, in Milan. He suggested that he should see her parents, but with a passionate appeal she requested him not to do so, but to take her away at once.

As he probably thought that this course would very considerably simplify matters, as well as save expense, —for he was too shrewd to suppose her people would let her go unless they were well paid,—he told her that in a few days' time he would be returning to Italy, and would take her with him. In the mean time she was to say nothing to any one of what she was going to do; and at a certain hour on a certain evening she was to meet him at Ludgate Hill Railway Station, and proceed to Paris by the night train. The arrangement was duly carried out, and Veronica entered upon a new phase of existence.

When she failed to return home as was her wont, her parents were filled with anxiety, for she had been very profitable to them; and their sordid instincts far outweighed parental affection. Indeed, it may be doubted whether they bore her any affection at all. It was the money they thought of; and when several days had passed and she had not returned, they went to the police station and expressed a fear that she had been decoyed away or that something dreadful had happened to her. Of course an attempt was made by the police to trace her, but nothing came of it; and in the course of a month or two her parents probably came to the conclusion that she was lost to them for ever.

Several years elapsed; Signorina Tortolini had become famous as a ballet-dancer, and was known almost throughout Europe. Not only was she celebrated as a dancer, but as a beauty: dark as night, with perfect teeth, an olive complexion, a wealth of blue-black hair, lustrous eyes with deep heavy lashes, and a faultless figure. She made slaves of men wherever she went. By this time her parents were both dead. They had never done anything to beget her love, and possibly she experienced no regret when she learnt that she was an orphan.

At last she returned to London, where she had known so much misery and suffering. But now she came as a person of importance. She was no longer poor, for she kept her maid, rode in her carriage, and occupied "swell" apartments in the West End of London. She was engaged as principal dancer at the Great Novelty Theatre, which had gained an European reputation for its spectacular productions, and it was said that Signorina Tortolini was enabled to command a salary of £150 a week. This could hardly be regarded as an extravagant remuneration in view of the attraction she proved to be. She became the rage of London. Her beauty turned the heads of all the dudes in Great Babylon, and the Press were unanimous in declaring that she was one of the most expert and remarkable dancers that had ever been seen in the British metropolis. She continued at the theatre for several seasons, and at the time the startling incident happened that I am about to relate she was performing in a grand spectacular pantomime that was attracting all London to witness it. In this pantomime Signorina Tortolini seemed to have surpassed all her previous efforts, and her admirers raved about her. The homage she received many a real queen

might have envied, while men with more money than brains were so electrified by her exquisite grace and beauty that they would have laid their fortunes at her feet. But she was a coquette. She had been educated in the hard school of the London streets; she knew something of the hollowness of human nature and the inborn deceit of the human heart; and while she showed no particular favour to any one, she flattered all who had long purses, and it was whispered that she was growing wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice.

It goes without saying that none of those who now regarded her as little short of a divinity were aware of her origin. They did not know that in her baby-hood she had been carried about on a hand-cart in company with an organ, and that later she had been a flower-hawker in the streets of London. And most of them, no doubt, were equally unaware that she had never had a day's schooling in her life, and could hardly write her own name. But she possessed in a very eminent degree the power of fascinating the opposite sex, and she used this power to her own advantage. Her life, poor thing, was a fever, and was destined to have a strange and startling end.

One night, when the Christmas season was about half ended, she was not ready, as was her wont, to go on the stage to take part in the principal ballet. This caused considerable surprise, as she had never before been known to keep the stage waiting. The call-boy was despatched with all speed to her dressing-room, and, having knocked and knocked without getting a reply, he opened the door and looked in, when, to his horror and amazement, he found her lying on her back on the floor, her limbs contorted, her face ghastly, and foam oozing from her lips. Forthwith he rushed down to the

stage to tell the manager what he had seen, and when the manager hurried to the room he thought she must be in a fit, and as speedily as possible a doctor was procured, but a hasty examination showed him that she was not in a fit, but stone dead.

The audience were kept in ignorance of this fact, and when they roared and screamed for their favourite, they were informed that Signorina Tortolini had been seized with sudden indisposition, and could not appear that evening. The following day, when the news spread of her death, the excitement was tremendous, and it was increased when the rumour ran that she had committed suicide by poisoning herself. People could not believe that this beautiful woman, who was said to be rich, and was surrounded with all the luxuries that wealth could purchase, had put an end to her life. What was the motive that had prompted her to such a desperate act? Had she found life so bitter that in a sudden frenzy she had shuffled off the coil that bound her to mortal things? Sudden indeed it must have been, for she had already appeared in the opening scenes of the pantomime; and when she was found dead she was fully attired in the light but gorgeous costume in which she danced in the ballet scene, and the maid who dressed her asserted that the Signorina had sent her out of the room, saying she would be down on the stage in a few minutes.

A *post-mortem* examination was perforce held, with the result that it was proved beyond all doubt that poor Signorina Tortolini had died of prussic acid, and that the quantity she had taken was sufficient to have poisoned half-a-dozen people. The vehicle in which she had taken the poison was an egg-flip made of sherry, which she was in the habit of having regularly every night.

When the evidence was heard at the inquest, there was good reason to doubt whether the girl had committed suicide, and rumours of foul play began to spread about. I received instructions to make an investigation, and my first inquiries were directed to trying to discover if she had ever been known to express a wish to get rid of her life. But without a single exception every one I questioned was emphatic in the statement that she was singularly cheerful and fond of life, and was in the habit of talking of the time when she would return to her native country, Italy, and build herself a grand house; for though illiterate and uneducated, she had a great notion of posing as a person of wealth and position. I next endeavoured to ascertain if she had purchased poison anywhere, but could get no evidence that she had done so. Then I asked myself, "Whence did the poison come that had destroyed her?" A thorough and minute search of all her things, her boxes, her jewel-cases, the pockets of her clothes, failed to discover a trace of poison of any description, and the more I examined into the matter, the more convinced I became that Tortolini had not committed suicide, but had been murdered. When she had left the stage to change her costume for the great ballet scene, she was exceptionally lively, for she had received a tremendous reception, and had had several magnificent bouquets thrown at her feet. Nothing that I could unearth in regard to her tended to make the theory of suicide in the least degree probable. Of course there was the possibility of accident, but the most careful inquiries failed to prove that prussic acid had ever been used in the theatre for any purpose whatever. But even supposing that it had, by what strange concatenation of circumstances did such a quantity get into the unfor-

tunate woman's room, and into her egg-flip, which was her nightly drink? This decoction was always made up for her from new-laid eggs which her maid brought up daily, and the sherry used was part of a small stock she kept for the purpose in a cupboard in the dressing-room, to which no one had access save the Signorina herself and her maid. An examination of the cupboard proved that there were six bottles of sherry with the seals unbroken, and the remains of a bottle that had been in use. This bottle contained about one-third of the original contents, and analysis failed to detect any poison in it. It was evident, therefore, the deadly drug had been put into the egg-flip, which was usually kept warm in a glazed earthenware pot that stood on the hob of the fireplace. This pot still contained some of the flip, but it was free from poison, The prussic acid, therefore, had been put into the glass from which poor Signorina Tortolini had drunk preparatory to descending to the stage to go through her arduous performance as the chief dancer in the ballet. The fatal draught must have been almost instantaneous in its effects, although it was clear she had suffered a spasm of agony, as was evidenced by the contortion of her body. Such, then, were the facts in connection with this mysterious and extraordinary case. And every step of my investigation only served to confirm the opinion I had come to—that it was murder—cruel and revengeful murder; for no other motive save revenge would fit in as feasible. It was on these lines that I began to work; and though I was confronted with as strange a case as I had ever been called upon to unravel, I nevertheless had a strong hope that I should succeed in clearing up the mystery.

I need scarcely say, perhaps, that I was convinced in my own mind that the hand which had administered the deadly drug was the hand of some one employed in the theatre. Now, the theatre was a very large one, and the *employés* during the pantomime season were numbered by hundreds. But it was reasonable to say that at least ninety per cent. of these could be left out of the calculation altogether. The margin was thus narrowed down. Nevertheless, at that stage of the inquiry it was an exceedingly difficult task to point to any individual as the probable criminal: and, fully recognizing the difficulty, I proceeded with the greatest caution and secrecy, for I desired that the guilty person should for the time remain in fancied security, inasmuch as by believing himself secure he would probably relax caution, and by some careless act play into my hands.

Such a case as this was one which necessarily required a very great deal of tact and discrimination, to say nothing of patience and perseverance. Silently, as the outraged law's avenger, I went to work, and step by step I traced Signorina Tortolini's career backward to the time when she made her first appearance in London as an infant in the basket on the wheelbarrow. I brought to light a secret which she had kept well, and that was that while she was in Italy, and before she was twenty, she was married to an actor whom she met at La Scala. But he turned out a worthless scamp, and they separated a few months after marriage; and a little later he drove himself mad with drink, and had been confined in a lunatic asylum ever since. This marriage had no bearing upon the case, and I merely mention it as an interesting incident in connection with Tortolini's strange career.

Let it not be supposed that during all the time I was pursuing my inquiries I lost sight of the possibility that the guilty hand was that of Tortolini's maid. This woman was a widow of about thirty years of age. Her husband had been a cornet-player, and had fulfilled engagements in the metropolis. His wife —whose name was Jane Spalding—had also been connected with theatres nearly all her life, and had been in Tortolini's employ as a dresser and maid for a long time. I kept Spalding closely under surveillance, but learnt nothing that justified my harbouring suspicion against her. Indeed, she had everything to lose by the death of her mistress, who had been an exceptionally good friend to her; and for her to have killed this friend would have been to have killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. As a matter of fact, Spalding was bowed down with grief, and her grief was genuine—of that I had no doubt. Although up to this point I had been unable to fix suspicion upon any particular person, I did not swerve in my belief that the guilty one had been employed in the theatre on the night of the crime. Three months had passed since Tortolini's death, and the pantomime company had dispersed, but still I did not relax my efforts to unravel the mystery and bring the crime home, and at last I got a clue.

In the employ of a firm of eminent drysalters who carried on business in one of the large towns of the Midlands was a Mr. William Brinton, who travelled for the firm and periodically visited London. This gentleman had a married sister, whose name was Florence Arkwright. She was an actress, and was professionally known as Miss Tilly Florence, while her husband played under his own name of Spencer Arkwright. They were both engaged at the Great

Novelty Theatre during the run of the pantomime, and in the course of that period Mr. William Brinton had been in London, and had stayed with his sister and brother-in-law, who rented a house in Brompton. He had stayed there during the season three or four times, and on each occasion he had among his drug samples, in his sample case, a small quantity of prussic acid. Now, what was the inference to be drawn from this fact? A proportion of the fearful drug extracted each time from the samples would in the aggregate make up a large quantity, and a large quantity had been used to kill Tortolini. But who had used it for that wicked purpose? Not Brinton himself, for I was satisfied that he knew nothing of Signorina Tortolini, and had never spoken to her in his life. Upon two persons, therefore, my suspicions fell. Those two persons were Arkwright and his wife.

Now, in pursuing an inquiry of this nature it was of the very first importance to a solution of the mystery that a motive for the crime should be approximately determined, and I turned my attention to endeavouring to find out if the Arkwrights had any motive for killing the Fairy Queen of the Great Novelty Pantomime. Arkwright, I should state, was a young and handsome man, of about thirty-two or -three, with a most seductive and attractive manner. On the other hand, his wife was a somewhat plain-looking woman, and her husband's senior by three or four years. Possibly in her youth she had been attractive enough, but that day was past, and she was now decidedly *passée*. I soon learned that the Arkwrights were an ill-matched pair. He was flighty and fond of female society, and his wife was madly jealous of him. Here, then, was what, on the face of it, seemed to be a very adequate motive for the crime; for, assuming

that Arkwright had carried on an intrigue with Signorina Tortolini, the assumption that his wife had been spurred on to commit the crime by motives of fierce jealousy was the natural deduction. But I had yet to prove there had been an intrigue, and I could get no evidence then that such had been the case. Nevertheless, the various links that I had thus fitted in formed such a strong chain of circumstantial evidence against Mrs. Arkwright that I resolved not to lose sight of her. She had, in my mind, become the central figure of the grim tragedy, and that she had been enabled to possess herself of prussic acid from her brother's samples seemed pretty conclusive. Now, if she was the murderess, the only motive apparently that she had for taking the unfortunate Italian's life was jealousy; and yet I could find no living soul who had ever seen anything between Arkwright and Tortolini that was suggestive of an intrigue. On the contrary, evidence was forthcoming that she did not like Arkwright; at least, certain people stated that they had heard her say so; but of course I did not attach any great weight to that. Nevertheless, I could not prove that it was not true; and at last I decided on having an interview with Mrs. Arkwright, in order that I might, if possible, justify the suspicions I entertained against her. I therefore called upon her one evening when her husband was out. She did not know me, and for the nonce I assumed the *rôle* of a theatrical manager who was anxious to engage her services. Having sustained a conversation for some time on theatrical matters, I suddenly and abruptly exclaimed—

"By the way, you were well acquainted with the late Signorina Tortolini, were you not?"

"Yes," she answered, with something like a sneer.

"What sort of a woman was she?"

"A snake!" hissed Mrs. Arkwright, with peculiar bitterness, which had a strange significance.

"Indeed!" I answered, with apparent unconcern. "I thought she was a very charming woman."

"Did you? Well, you have been misinformed. She was a devil."

"What makes you say that?"

"I have my reasons."

"What are your reasons?"

"Well, I don't know that I need state them to you. You are a stranger to me."

"Shall I make a guess at them?" I asked, with a forced smile, as though I had no more than a passing concern in questioning her, and yet I felt that I was gradually tightening the law's iron grip about her.

"Oh, if you like," she said lightly, and with a toss of her head.

"You were jealous of her," I remarked, fixing my gaze upon her, and closely watching the workings of her face, which began unmistakably to show uneasiness.

"And if I were," she answered, "I had good cause to be so."

"Why?"

"Because she sought to win my husband from me."

With this answer she gave herself completely away, and rising up, and deeply impressed with the seriousness of the situation, I said—

"Mrs. Arkwright, I have always thought Tortolini was murdered through motives of jealousy. It is evident that you were jealous of her, and the inference is that you murdered her, and you obtained the poison by abstracting it from your brother's sample case."

For a moment she looked as if she had been suddenly turned to stone. Her face was ghastly; her eyes were wild and restless; and she glanced nervously about like a hunted animal seeking for some means of escape from its pursuers. Crossing the room to where she stood, I laid my hand lightly on her arm, saying gently—

"I am a detective—my name is Donovan—and I arrest you on suspicion of having poisoned Signorina Tortolini."

These words broke the spell that seemed to have fallen upon her, and with a strange, almost unearthly shriek she reeled, and fell heavily to the floor.

I obtained assistance, and had her conveyed to the police station, but it very soon became evident that her reason had fled. In fact, she had become a dangerous and hopeless lunatic. As by the law of England such a person could not be put on trial, she was sent to an asylum, where for many years she was confined, suffering from acute mania. At last, one day eluding the vigilance of her keepers, she sprang over a hedge at the bottom of the recreation ground, rushed across a field, and threw herself into a deep pond, where she was drowned before assistance could reach her.

Although legally the crime was never proved against her, no reasonable being could doubt she was a murderess, and there was a grim satisfaction in knowing that poor Tortolini's cruel death did not go unavenged.

TAKEN IN THE ACT.

For some time the passengers by the steamers of the Mediterranean and Oriental Steam Navigation Company complained bitterly that things were stolen from their cabins, and that their luggage was frequently broken open and valuables abstracted. These robberies were conducted in such a mysterious way, and the complaints became so numerous, that the directors felt bound, in their own interests, to take some active measures to discover the thief or thieves. On the very face of it, it seemed that several persons must be concerned, for only by a systematic and organized conspiracy could such a series of robberies have been perpetrated, and it was no less certain that the robbers were as bold as they were expert. The result was, I was requested to take the matter up and endeavour to bring the rascals to justice.

In making my investigations into all the circumstances, I found that generally the robberies had been committed between Bordeaux and Lisbon, both places being ports of call for the Company's steamers. This fact was very significant, and seemed to me to point to Bordeaux or Lisbon as the headquarters of the operators. And the more I pursued my inquiries, the more convinced was I that a very clever band was at work, and that it might not be an easy task to detect them. For being expert thieves, and belonging—if I may so express myself—to the upper classes of knaves, they were not likely to be caught napping. By using the

term "upper classes" in this sense, I refer, of course, to the swell mobsmen, who have not only capital to work with, but conduct their operations on a thoroughly organized business system. Moreover, as such men are fully alive to the risks they run, they keep a very sharp look-out, and their spies are constantly on the alert.

In accordance with my instructions, I set sail in the Company's steamer Orinoco, which left Gravesend on the 12th of June, and made a fine run down to Plymouth. I need scarcely say, perhaps, that I did not appear amongst the list of passengers in my own name, but for the nonce assumed that of Charles Erkroyd Freemantle. When we left Gravesend we had ninety-two first class passengers, and eighty-four second class. During the run to Plymouth, as the weather was particularly fine, and the sea as smooth as a mill-pond, I had ample opportunity of taking stock of my fellow-voyagers. A good many of them were old Australian colonists, returning to their homes after a visit to the mother country. The rest were of the usual miscellaneous and nondescript character peculiar to all passenger steamers trading to the colonies. There was the well-to-do horse-dealer, whose calling was indicated in his dress, his style, his movements, his talk, his voice, the cut of his hair, the trim of his beard; for it is a well-known fact that men who are constantly with horses develop certain horsey characteristics, by which they are easily distinguished. There were men leaving home for the first time to seek their fortunes, and women going out to join their husbands or lovers, and others going on speculation in the hope of getting husbands. There were pretty girls and ugly girls, adventurous widows, and selfish bachelors, who, while ready enough for a mild flirtation, were not to be entrapped by female

charms. Altogether, there was nothing to distinguish the human cargo from the passengers usually found on board any ocean-going steamer of the same class. No doubt each had his or her little romance, and the stories of their lives would probably have made absorbing reading—highly sensational in many cases, pathetic or humorous in others. But a number of persons thus thrown promiscuously together for a brief period usually remain sealed books to each other, except in certain cases, and an outsider can only speculate as to what they are and what they are likely to be. To me, the study of human nature is of fascinating interest, but in the present instance I was intent on trying to get a clue that would enable me to detect the perpetrators of the numerous robberies. Amongst all the passengers, however, there was not one who aroused my suspicions; but of course I was not indifferent to the fact that the voyage was then young; we were all strangers to each other, and it would take some days before the icy barriers which characterize a British gathering were broken down.

At Plymouth our number of saloon passengers was increased by twenty others, male and female, and amongst them was a clergyman, whose name, I ascertained a little later, was Horace Venables. The Rev. Horace Venables—as he himself informed me—was travelling for his health. He was a young man of about thirty-two, very gentlemanly in his manner, and of good address; and yet somehow—I could scarcely explain why—I very soon began to think that the Rev. Horace Venables was not altogether what he represented himself to be. On the second day after leaving Plymouth a gale sprang up, and the rev. gentleman was, or pretended to be, prostrated with sea-sickness.

As we neared Bordeaux, which was our next port of call, the weather became beautifully fine again, and all the passengers were up—but the Rev. Horace Venables. As soon as we anchored in Bordeaux, however, he appeared on deck once more, looking very sprightly and anything but an invalid. As we were likely to be detained for at least twelve hours, nearly all the passengers went on shore, including Horace Venables; and I was also amongst the number. My fellow-travellers were, of course, intent on sight-seeing; but I, knowing Bordeaux well, devoted my attention to the Rev. Venables, whose movements certainly seemed to me to be strange, and not in accordance with what one might have expected from a clergyman who was desirous of making himself agreeable. He showed, for instance, a very pronounced desire to be left alone, and though he was invited by a party of ladies and gentlemen to accompany them,—for it had been early discovered in some way that he spoke French fluently,—he declined, without, however, making the slightest excuse for so doing. As I was aware of this little fact, the suspicions I had begun to entertain were strengthened, and so I resolved to shadow the interesting gentleman without his being aware of it.

He did not go ashore until all the others had gone, and then he took a fiacre and drove to a distant part of the town, where he alighted at the door of a house, and, ringing the bell, he was admitted by the *concièrge*, and for the time I lost sight of him.

It was now very evident that he was no stranger in Bordeaux, and I ascertained that the gentleman he inquired for was a Monsieur Eugène Guigou, who was said to be a wine merchant. I will frankly confess here that at this stage it seemed to me I had done the Rev.

Horace Venables a wrong in entertaining suspicion against him. Nevertheless, with the pertinacity which is part of my nature, I could not bring myself to abandon my man, for I was not yet satisfied that I was wrong, although it seemed very like it then. Let it not be supposed, however, that I was deceived by mere appearances. Two hours passed, and then the Rev. Horace Venables reappeared, accompanied by a very venerable and gentlemanly-looking man, who I concluded was Monsieur Guigou. The two drove to a fashionable *café* in the heart of the town, where they partook of a very substantial repast, which included two or three sorts of wine, to which the Rev. Venables did ample justice. The luncheon finished, they adjourned to the outside of the *café*, where they lit their cigars, and ordered coffee and cognac. Whatever else my man might be, I had seen sufficient to warrant me in saying that he was a lover of the fleshpots of Egypt, and seemed to have a very high appreciation of the good things of life.

Monsieur Guigou and the Rev. Horace Venables remained together for some hours longer. Then they parted, and the clergyman returned to the ship. I followed him soon after; and I had no reason to suppose he had been conscious for a moment that he had been shadowed. We weighed anchor at midnight and proceeded to sea, and the following day a lady complained that a quantity of very valuable jewellery had been stolen from a box in her cabin. She had seen it safe three or four days previously; and as the lock of the box was intact, it was evident it had been picked or opened by means of a skeleton key. This discovery led to others being made, and there was a general complaint amongst the ladies that they had lost articles of jewellery.

A careful consideration of all the circumstances seemed to point to the robberies having been effected before the vessel reached Bordeaux. And now my suspicions against the Rev. Horace Venables were not only revived, but increased tenfold. But, of course, suspicion was not proof, and the immediate difficulty was to get proof. It would have been a dangerous proceeding to have openly accused the suspected man. Moreover, there was another aspect to the case which I could not overlook, and that was to determine under what jurisdiction the crime had been committed. It was a British ship, sailing under the British flag, and yet the robberies might have taken place in French waters. But even then it was a nice point to determine whether the thief would be amenable to British or French law. The situation was a delicate one, and in the event of a false accusation the consequences might be serious. I resolved, therefore, to act with the greatest circumspection, and I took counsel with the captain, who further strengthened my suspicions by saying that he believed he recognized in the Rev. Horace Venables a man who had sailed with him before as a merchant. He confessed, however, that he could not be sure about it; nevertheless, I thought it probable, and resolved on the course to pursue. I found that the suspected passenger had only booked as far as Lisbon, and so I decided to land there too, but took every precaution not to let this be known.

As soon as Lisbon was reached I hurried ashore and placed myself in communication with the police authorities, but every one knows what a wretched dilatory lot they are, and how they are enveloped and enslaved with red tape. All sorts of obstacles were

thrown in my way, and the one question that was dinned into my ears was—

"Have you any proof, Señor—have you any proof?"

Of course I had no proof, but my suspicions were well founded. The frowsy Portuguese officials, however, simply shrugged their shoulders, smoked their cigarettes, and coolly said they could not render me any assistance whatever. I therefore appealed to the Custom House authorities and entreated them to make the fullest possible examination of the Rev. Horace Venables' luggage, in the hope that some of the stolen property might be discovered amongst it, whereby I should have very tangible evidence, and the police would then probably arrest him. A promise was given that this search should be made, and I was present, although the fact was unknown to Venables, when his luggage was subjected to the scrutiny of the Custom House people. He betrayed not the slightest concern, but calmly and philosophically smoked a cigar, as well he might, for in spite of a crucial examination, nothing whatever was found in his luggage of an incriminating character; and the police again shrugged their shoulders and laughed satirically at me, saying that if they had been led by me they would have committed a grave error.

Although up to now I had failed, I was not going to abandon Mr. Venables. He might be all that he professed to be, but to my mind there was something very fishy about him; and though it took me a year to do it, I was determined to find out all there was to find out about the Rev. Horace Venables. The Orinoco proceeded on her voyage, leaving him and me in Lisbon; and then the first thing I did was to wire a cipher message to Scotland Yard asking them to let me know if Mr. Venables' name appeared in the Clergy List, and

soon the answer "No" came back. Here, then, was the first distinct confirmation and justification of my suspicions. It was now clear that Venables, by passing himself off as a clergyman, was in that respect at least an impostor, and some deep and dark design must have been at the bottom of it. It became more apparent to me every day that he was an old hand, and by no means disposed to give himself away if he could help it, and therefore he acted with great circumspection, and, though he stayed at one of the best hotels, he remained very quiet, and kept himself secluded; and all this time, but quite unknown to him, I acted like his shadow, and his movements were all known to me. Thus it was I ascertained that he had booked a passage for England in one of the same Company's return steamers called the Shoehaven, which was then expected in port from her southern voyage in a few days. It goes without saying that I also engaged a berth in the same boat; and I felt perfectly convinced now in my own mind that Venables was a rank impostor, and was playing a deep and dark game against the interests of law and order, —a game which it was my duty to defeat.

In due course the Shoehaven came in. She had a full complement of passengers, and most of them being people of means, their belongings were likely to prove rich spoil for an adventurer who had no regard for the laws of *meum* and *tuum*. The vessel was detained at Lisbon considerably longer than usual owing to some defect in her machinery, which had to be made good before she could proceed. She therefore did not weigh anchor again until the evening of the third day after her arrival.

As soon as I went on board I made known my business to the captain, and he promised to afford me every possible facility for detecting the thief if he was on

board. The weather at this period had undergone a very considerable change, and immediately the ship was clear of the Tagus she experienced heavy gales, and carried them with her right to Bordeaux. As she was not a good sea boat in a sea way, but rolled heavily, most of the passengers were confined to their cabins, and from this cause, as I presumed, my "suspect" was unable to operate. At any rate, closely as I watched him, I saw nothing that could be taken as proof of my suspicions, and had I been less hard to convince I might have abandoned the chase under the impression that I was on a wrong scent. But I would not do that, for it was beyond dispute that Venables was sailing under false colours, and he must have had some strong motive for that. During the run to Bordeaux he kept himself very secluded, and did not mix much with his fellow-travellers. At Bordeaux he went ashore, and once again visited Monsieur Guigou, and again they dined together.

The bad weather continued after we left the French ports, and the passage through the Bay of Biscay was unusually stormy for the time of the year. But at last we ran into smoother water, and the sun shone brightly as we neared Plymouth, our next port of call. Of course, all the passengers were more or less excited at the prospect of once more beholding their native shores, and they crowded the decks anxious to get the first glimpse of land. My vigilance was now redoubled, for I was sure that if Venables meant business he would not let this opportunity slip.

One evening, when we were expecting to sight the Eddystone, every one had crowded to the poop and other parts of the vessel, and eagerly scanned the horizon for the flashing of the welcome beacon. Mr. Venables had been sitting in the saloon reading, or

pretending to read; and on a settee at the extreme end of the saloon, and in deep shadow, so that I could not be seen by any one only a little way off, I lay in a position of slumber, but I never was wider awake in my life. Presently Venables rose, walked to the door of the saloon, and went on deck. But he returned in a few minutes, and his movements convinced me that he was reconnoitring. Then he walked round the saloon, pausing now and again, as if in the attitude of listening. I was all alert now, for I felt as if some important developments were about to take place. At last he disappeared in one of the alloways, and as I knew that his cabin was not there, I knew he was trespassing. I therefore moved stealthily forward until I commanded a view of the alloway. He had gone into one of the two cabins there. It was one of the best state-rooms, occupied by an Australian lady and her daughter, who were reputed to be very rich. I listened, straining my hearing to catch any sound; and I did hear sounds that left no doubt in my mind that the Rev. Venables was manipulating the lock of a chest. I waited long enough to let him complete his work; then I crept down the alloway silently, and peeped in. Venables was then down on his knees, engaged in searching the cabin box of one of the ladies, the lock having been undone by means of a skeleton key. So intent was he on his work that he did not notice me. Presently he found a small case—the lid of which he forced open with a tiny chisel he took from his coat pocket. The case contained jewellery, which he immediately proceeded to manipulate, and, abstracting it, he stuffed it into his pockets.

At this interesting stage of the little drama I stepped softly into the cabin, and laying my hand on the rascal's shoulder, I said—

"It seems to me that you are an intruder here, and engaged in an illegal occupation."

He sprang to his feet suddenly. He was white as death, and his face was filled with a scared look.

"What do you mean?" he asked hoarsely.

"I mean that you are a thief and an impostor."

"You lie!" he stammered. "I am a gentleman and a clergyman, and will make you pay dearly for the dastardly accusation."

"The lie is on your side," I answered quietly, "for you are not a clergyman."

"And who are you, pray?" he demanded, growing hoarser and, if possible, more deadly pale.

"I am a detective," I said, "specially commissioned to shadow you. I have shadowed you for weeks, and have at last caught you in the act, and now make you my prisoner."

For a moment he seemed to reel as if he was going to fall. But with a quick, sudden movement he sprang towards the door, and tried to pass me. I was too sharp for him, however. Nevertheless he struggled desperately, trying to get his hands to my throat, but I pinned him against the edge of one of the bunks. The noise we made brought in one of the stewards who had just entered the saloon, and I called upon him to help me. With his assistance I soon had the handcuffs on the wrists of the "Rev. Mr. Venables," and when he found that his game was up he began to whine for mercy. I sent at once for the captain, and by his advice I removed my prisoner to one of the deck cabins, where we securely bound him to a stanchion, and I kept watch and ward over him, for I was fearful that he would commit suicide if he got the chance. However, the chance did not occur.

About midnight we dropped anchor in Plymouth Sound, and as soon after as possible I conveyed my prisoner ashore, and placed him in safe keeping in the police station. He had become sullen and silent now, resolutely refusing to answer any questions. On searching his baggage, we found a great quantity of small articles, mostly jewellery, that had obviously been stolen, and much of which was subsequently claimed by the passengers on board the Shoehaven. Papers and letters in his trunks also proved that he was one of the ringleaders of a clever and notorious gang of rascals who had spread their ramifications far and wide. Eugène Guigou, of Bordeaux, was one of the confederates, his principal duty being to dispose of the stolen property. Venables proved to be a convict named Walter Richards, who had suffered two terms of imprisonment, both for forgery. He was a member of a very good family, and had been well educated, but had never done any good for himself, and all the efforts of his friends to reclaim him proved fruitless.

After repeated remands, he was sent for trial, and we were enabled to get such evidence that the jury had no difficulty in convicting him, and the Judge denounced him as not only "a pest to society," but "a dangerous and accomplished villain"; and in order to stop his career of villainy for a time, he received a sentence of ten years' penal servitude. Guigou was also brought to book by the French authorities, and received a due meed of punishment.

I was complimented on the part I had played, and I had the satisfaction of knowing that I was instrumental in stopping the "Rev. Horace Venables'" little game for some time to come.

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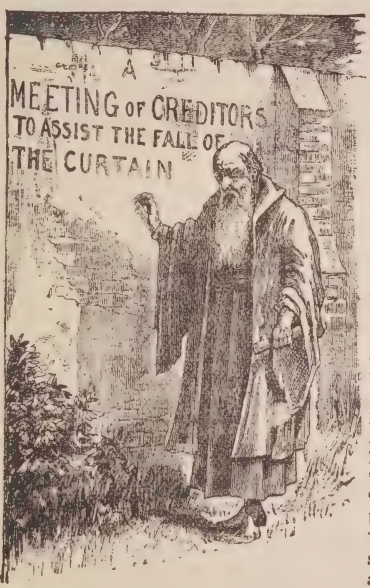

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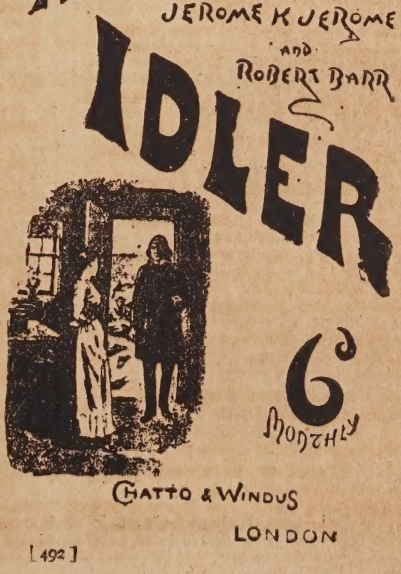

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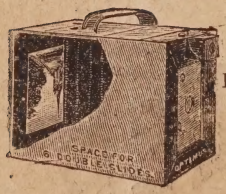

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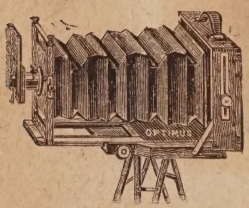

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